



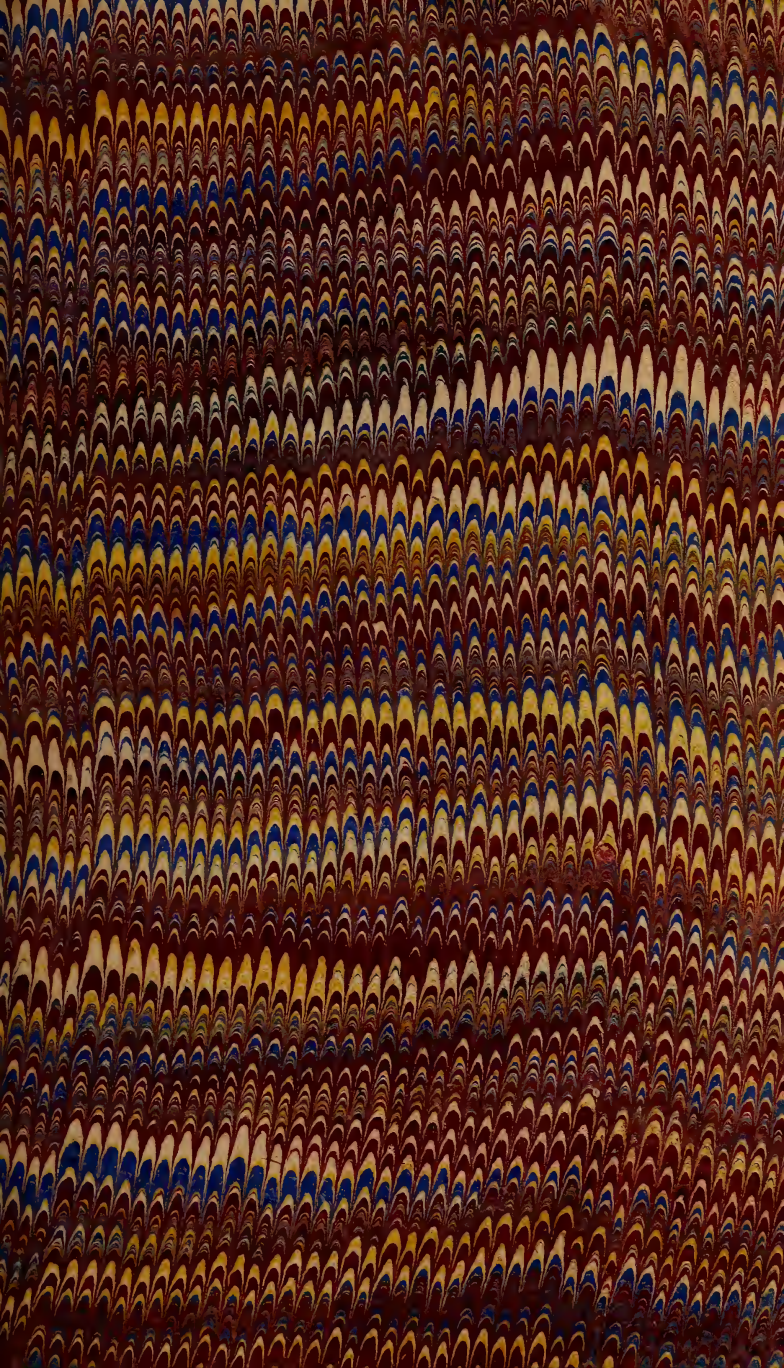
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THE SOLACE OF A SOLITAIRE.





THE  
SOLACE OF A SOLITAIRE:

A Record of Facts and Feelings.

BY  
MARY ANN <sup>✓</sup>KELTY,  
AUTHOR OF "VISITING MY RELATIONS," ETC.

"What is man, and whereto serveth he? What is his good, and what is his evil?"—ECCLESIASTICUS (Apocrypha) xviii. 8.

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# THE SOLACE OF A SOLITAIRE.

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## CHAPTER I.

I THINK it is Voltaire, who, in his epigrammatic way, observes, that "solitude is delightful; but it is desirable to have some one at hand to sympathise in the pleasure it affords you."

It is a great and stubborn fact that "it is not good for man to be alone." Still less is it good for woman, inasmuch as in her temperament, feeling and imagination are far more predominant than in his; and, from the usual tenor of her education, she has not the means of keeping these impulses in abeyance, by directing her mind to the calming influence of scientific pursuits. Neither by her appointed and proper  
A

place in human affairs has she the resources which open a way of escape from morbid emotions that man has, in those stern duties of wrestling with circumstances, and fighting his way to position and pecuniary comfort, which every day, and sometimes all the day long, engage his time and thoughts. Of course, I am speaking of woman, as consigned by the condition of loneliness, to make out her happiness as best she may. When her lot is the natural and usual one of a wife and mother, she has (or ought to have) occupations and duties enough to engage far too much of her attention to leave her any leisure for the roving and romance of the imagination. And when this is not the case, and her destiny is that which in courtesy is termed "single blessedness," she has usually, in surrounding relatives, many claimants upon her kind offices, which, when faithfully and affectionately responded to, often grant, in the sweet consciousness of being useful, and the inward testimony of conscience to the fulfilment of duty,—to the good maiden aunt or cousin of the family, a happier lot than to the wife and mother.

These are women whose course amidst the soft charities of life seems to be over a prairie sown with flowers. But there are some of the sex to whom such resources are denied, and whose journey has to be taken in absolute loneliness, and not through verdant and flowery prairies, but through a sandy desert, and a "waste howling wilderness."

Amongst these travellers, it has been ordained that I should take my place. Of the circumstances which led to such a dispensation I could say enough to fill a volume ; but it would be only to strengthen the egotism which is already in me, as in all solitary persons, too prominent a trait.

The bewitching charm of talking about one's self is of the most dangerous and deluding character. It seems to me much like spreading out faults and follies, as a draper spreads his goods upon a counter, for the public to take their choice of which is the best ; and probably to go away with the remark that there is nothing worth having in the whole lot.

Still, I must do something ; and to have an occupation for my pen having been my habit for a much longer period than fifty years, it appears

to be the employment best fitted for me to engage in. So to that I turn. But in what way am I to use this restless pen? I cannot go into autobiography, for, how can I come before the public with revelations respecting my personal history whilst I am still living? Such a proceeding would be about as derogatory to self-respect as if I were to beat a drum and gather a crowd to see me walk about the streets on stilts. No; I won't sit down and tell my own story,—that's clear. "But you can tell a part of it,—you can bring out bits here and there," said self-love, clinching the argument by reminding me that it was by the relation of personal experience alone that striking passages in the life of any individual could be made of use in instructing others. I was told also to remember, how Madame de Staël (at least according to her relative and biographer, Madame Neckar de Saussure,) had intended to write a work on "The Education of the Heart from the Circumstances of Life;" and how could she have done this, except by revealing the history of her own heart, since that was the only one with whose education she could have had any expe-

rience? All this is very true, I replied, for the exhibitions of self-consciousness are, undoubtedly, those which concern us individually, much more than statements which guardedly and designedly stand aloof from all personal reference.

"All that great world," says M. de Montalembert, "which palpitates within the narrow limits of a man's life, of a heart which loves,—ah, this is the most beautiful and absorbing of histories. This is the tale which endures, and moves us all to the depths."

But what says that philosopher and acute critic, Mr Emerson, on the subject of egotism?—and autobiography, we must remember, is only another word for egotism—that miserable propensity which he describes as "the scourge of talent,—of artists, inventors, and philosophers. Eminent spiritualists shall have an incapacity of putting their act or word aloof from them, and seeing it bravely, for the nothing which it is." \*

No; I will not of set purpose go into autobiographical details. I will let my pen take its course; and seeing that it is as the Solace of a

\* Conduct of Life, p. 82.



Solitaire I give it any exercise, I will get out of it what mental refreshment I can for myself, and endeavour to make it, as far as I can, diffusive of good to others.

## CHAPTER II.

I N accordance with the purpose with which I concluded the last chapter, I do not think I can better begin this than by transcribing a short sentence which, on my first waking this morning, presented itself to my notice.

“Do you sleep, then, with a book under your pillow?” you ask.

“No ; but always with one by my bed-side ; first, because I wake very early ; and next, because after sleep, and in the serene stillness of the morning hour, the mind is peculiarly open to impressions of an instructive kind. The sentence which came to me to-day as a morsel of spiritual good, was this remark of Lacordaire, the celebrated French priest : ‘To betake one’s self to one’s own interior and to God, gives the greatest strength in the world.’”

“Do you know anything about that?” quoth I to myself.

And here, to make myself intelligible, I may remark that, from living so long and so continuously in solitude, I have acquired a habit of holding dialogues with myself, or rather, with something better than myself, which often sets me right when I am about to diverge into error ; and is of great use in enabling me to understand what I am about, and where I am going. And when I say this, I beg to be understood, as by no means presuming to arrogate to myself anything peculiar to my own individuality in the possession of this bosom friend ; for it is near to every one of us, and only waits at the door of our conscience to obtain and respond to our notice.

When, therefore, my invisible but constant companion put the question whether I knew anything of the process of which Lacordaire made mention, and of the strength which he stated it to impart, I could, and did, promptly reply that I knew it well ; and could set my seal to it as a certain truth, known to me as such, upon the testimony of experience ; since, having for the last seven and

thirty years been driven, by the force of circumstances, to live chiefly in my own interior, I have there found strength (at least when I have earnestly sought it) which I never could find elsewhere.

Now, I feel persuaded that, on reading this statement of mine, which I make under the consciousness that it is witnessed by the Searcher of hearts, amongst those into whose hands it may fall, if they be earnest and sincere thinkers, they will wish for some more specific notice on my part, respecting a matter so little understood, but so often felt to be wanted by them.

This may be thought a bold assertion ; but, believe me, you must be bold when you feel that you know what you are talking about. What confidence should you have in that doctor, who, when you were consulting him about your health, and were waiting for the prescription you expected him to write,—were to talk about considering your case,—looking for it in his books ; and, in fact, all but saying that he did not understand it, and you had better come again in two or three days, when he had thought it over ?

Now the person, be it man or woman, who, upon

the borders of fourscore, writes or talks about human happiness or misery, which is just the healthy or unhealthy state of the soul, puts himself or herself in the place of the soul's physician ; and mustn't hum and ha, and think, and suppose, that this and the other method of managing yourself *may* be advisable ; but they must speak out affirmatively and say to you, "*do* so and so,—*do it* ; and then you will know the power that is in it to give you the strength you want, but have not."

But what right have you to assume to yourself the character of the soul's physician ? it will be said.

"No right," I reply,—and I don't assume it. It comes to me in the course of circumstances, as I have just told you, to have to seek in writing an occupation, and the solace for the burden of weariness which belongs to old age. The only question then is, What shall I write ? It is not to be autobiography. It *cannot* be romances and novels ; and God forbid it should be, even if I had the power ; since for an old man or woman to employ their time in portraying the vagaries of the



imagination, seems to me worse than doing nothing. And I do not say this because I have never tried the benefit that may, even as a mere mental resource, be found in writing a novel ; for, when I began my literary career, nearly fifty years ago, it was by writing one called "The Favourite of Nature." It was highly successful ;—reached a fourth edition, and brought me the sum of two hundred and fifty pounds ; which, though pleasant enough to receive as one of its results, was of small value in comparison with the mental resource it afforded me under domestic circumstances of a somewhat trying character. I have nothing, therefore, personally to say against novel writing under proper conditions ;—which old age is not to be considered ; so, there is an end of my writing anything in the shape of a story.

Without, therefore, assuming to myself the character of teacher or preacher, it seems, that as I *must* write, the becoming position I have to take as a writer is that of using the opportunity it affords of leaving upon record, for the good of any who may care to benefit by it, such of my experience as I have found profitable to myself. To

return therefore to the remark of Lacordaire, touching the strength that is to be found in retreating to God, and to one's own interior.

I do not hesitate to affirm that I *know* this to be a certain truth. It is a matter of experience with me. But how to persuade people to try and make it matter of experience to themselves is a difficult, not to say an impossible, thing to accomplish. Not, observe, because they do not feel the want of internal strength,—using the term as significant of a condition of inward repose and peace. I fully believe that there never was a time in which the *inner world*, or, in more simple parlance, the minds of human beings, presented a condition of greater tumult and consequent disquiet, than at the present day. The driving forces of ambition, of covetousness, of the love of pleasure, of every passion, in short, which the possession of money can help to gratify, seem to be at the back of almost everybody,—sending them on and on they don't know where,—to do they don't know what,—except that it is something to gratify the inordinate appetite of self-love, and self-will. No purpose,—no pursuit can be carried on with the

moderation which is essential to peace of mind. Peace of mind indeed ! The word of the prophet to Jezabel may be addressed now-a-days to every nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand, "What hast thou to do with peace ?" Especially is this want of spiritual rest experienced by those who are engaged in a commercial career. It was but yesterday evening that I was talking on this point with a family man of middle age, with whom, through his marriage with a near and dear connexion of mine, I am in habits of confidential intercourse. He is engaged in business, and I believe conducts it with due prudence and regard to the interests of those who are dependent upon him. Yet he acknowledged that in the present state of the commercial world, he believed it to be impossible for any one who was actively engaged in it, to know the meaning of such a feeling as peace of mind.

"I throw myself on the sofa," said he, "in the evening, and take up the newspaper, intending to have an hour's quiet recreation in reading it. But presently some engrossing thought of a business kind presents itself, and the paper drops on the

floor, whilst I follow out the suggestions of my mind."

I expressed, as I felt, a strong conviction that this thralldom of the mind to the things of this world, was nothing less than closing up every avenue to happiness.

"He could say nothing about that; all he could say was, that he felt persuaded he was not singular in the state of mind of which he had spoken; for that, he had no doubt, almost every man who was engaged in a large way of business, if he spoke the truth, would say as he did, that he could apply his mind to nothing else."

"To nothing else," said I, "but the way to get money?"

"Well, we must get money as a means of getting on."

"What is money without peace of mind?" quoth I.

"They are not thinking about peace of mind," he said; "their business lies elsewhere."

I mused for some time after I laid my head upon my pillow on what had passed, and Mrs Quickly's comments on the death of Falstaff came

to my remembrance. "A' made a finer end, and went away an it had been any christom child. 'How now, Sir John!' quoth I; 'what, man, be o' good cheer! So a' cried out God! three or four times. Now I, to comfort him, bid him a' should not think of God; I hoped there was no need to trouble himself with any such thoughts yet."—*King Henry V.*

Methinks it is the characteristic of the present age to be pretty much of Mrs Quickly's mind. It was the sign of a worldly man in the Psalmist's time, that "God was not in *all* his thoughts;" but the query now seems to be whether he is in *any* of them? Yet people have to suffer and die now, as has been their lot since the world began.

No doubt; but they have a different way of encountering suffering and death than they had formerly. We have changed that, with everything else that is slow and *roccoco*. With the heaps upon heaps of novels, and serial tales, coming in such shoals, that the wonder is how the printing presses are not worn out in producing them; with these "appliances and means to boot" for vanquishing affliction, who need to be un-



happy? One of the readiest ways of cheating reflection—(besides the old remedy of singing “Begone, dull care,”)—especially the reflection which is apt to hover over the minds of sick people, would seem to be the reading of a serial tale in one of the periodicals. I gather this from reading in one of these multitudinous publications not long since, of an invalid lady whose most uneasy feeling, under her trying circumstances, was a fear that she should die before the story which she was engaged in reading in a certain magazine was finished; and thus she would have to go out of the world without knowing the fate of the heroine! In this state of the public mind, it is but to a very limited circle I can look for any sympathy in the refreshment I felt this morning in the remark of Lacordaire. I shall nevertheless leave it to take its chance of notice and acceptance with the few who may possibly be disposed to receive and profit by it.

There is always a remote, if not a present hope in recording on paper a useful thought. Mr Roscoe (I think it was) concluded some lines he had been requested to write in an album with a

couplet as full of suggestive wisdom as it is of poetical beauty.

Having spoken with humility of the frailty of his tribute, and of the page on which he inscribed it, he adds,—

“ Yet shall they both preserve their worthless trust,  
When this still frailer hand is turned to dust.”

Even so—“Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.” \*

\* Ecclesiastes xi. 1.

### CHAPTER III.

I SAID in the outset of my engagement of writing this record, that I should let my pen take its own course ; and as that seems to prompt me to speak of what interests me in my morning meditations, as suggested by the books I open, (for it is little more than opening them that occurs—it having long been my habit to read very little at a time of a thoughtful book)—I will give you a sentence which to-day struck me as imparting counsel as sweet as it was instructive. I find it in the “Life and Letters of Gerhard Tersteegen,” a German writer of the mystical school ; and it occurs in a letter containing some directions he is giving to a correspondent respecting communion with God :—“Let it seem to thee,” he says, “as if thou wert in the company, secretly, of a kind and beloved friend, through a foreign land and a desert wilderness.”

It is often a pleasant, and, in some measure, a strengthening idea which I have of being attended by a guardian spirit, which, like that of Socrates, (that he calls his *demon*,) directs, reproves, restrains, and in times of trouble, comforts me. As Socrates observed of his invisible companion, my interior friend more often checks and calls me away from action, than he prompts me to engage in it. He seems to stand almost in perpetual antagonism to the impulses of my will, even in what may seem trivial things. I can recall instances in my experience, which occurred years before my mind came under the influence of religion as an abiding and practical principle, in which I was sensible of the presence and counsel of this invisible teacher ; and also that its action was most forcible when most needed. On one occasion in particular its restraining power was so vivid that I could have believed that with my bodily ear I heard a voice commanding me to "*be still*." The case was this : On the preceding day a domestic circumstance had occurred which was of a kind to occasion me extreme distress, and which caused me to retire to my bed extremely unhappy. On waking, my

burden of misery, as always, I believe, happens after sleep, especially with persons of acute feeling, started up like a spectre, and I was beginning to sigh and weep, when the words seemed to go through me, "*Hush—hush ! be still !*"

For a few moments I was really *awed* into silence ; but I was at that time too destitute of acquaintance with spiritual truth, and consequently of faith in its power, to follow in the path of obedience thus opened up to me.

I could multiply such instances of the timely and wise restraint of which I have been sensible in the silent world within my soul ; and very precious it is to me to believe that it originated in a far higher source than fancy. I got much to confirm and strengthen my faith in this inward Restrainer as nothing less than divine, by reading in Mr Emerson's " Representative Men," that " the Hindoos have denominated the Supreme Being *the Internal Check*."\*

But whilst I am making religion so prominent a theme, I am aware that I thereby endanger my own acceptance with a reader.

\* Article on Swedenborg, p. 104.

Distasteful, however, as the subject may be, it is a remarkable thing that we can never talk long and earnestly upon any matter that deeply interests our feelings, without, in some way or another, alluding to it. We may not mean to do so, nor even be aware that we *are* doing it, but the solemnising tenderness of everything that appeals to the heart, compels us, it may be but slightly as to words, but surely as to feeling, to have a sense upon our spirits that we are dealing with Him who holds our destiny in His hands, whenever we get to talking about what concerns our happiness or misery. We are, in short, for the time, under the influence of religion. For what is religion, I should like to know, in the proper meaning of the word, but TRUTH? That matter which usually goes by the name of religion, and which consists in the outward badge by which persons distinguish themselves as belonging to a particular class of professing hearers, is a long way from possessing the nature of that of which I desire and mean to speak in alluding to religion.

All thoughtful persons must be conscious of possessing certain instincts of a holy and very



precious kind, which, on all subjects that deeply affect their hearts, spontaneously mount upward (so to speak) to their heavenly source.

I had a charming illustration of this blessed yearning of the soul for divine communion with its Maker, this very day, in observing the singing of a lark as it sped on its way to the sky. Forth from the ground the joyous creature went, "singing and making melody in its heart," as if, in the exuberance of existence, it luxuriated in happiness. Presently, it sunk down to earth—contented to be there, and to be still—just as if its little humble offering of joyful gratitude being paid, its present work was done, and it was to wait quietly till the next impulse to mount and sing and rejoice was felt. It gave me a charming symbol of the soul in its aspirations of love and praise, now rising to the presence of its Creator with a song, and then, the divine afflatus withdrawn, sinking humbly down to its rest in peaceful silence. Ah, these brief but beautiful *outcomes* of devotional feeling, how exquisite is their influence! It must have been of these touches of communion with the Fountain of life and everlasting

joy, that the Psalmist spake when he said, "How precious are Thy thoughts unto me, O God ; how great is the sum of them !"

It is painful to think how little of this living and lovely worship is practised, and how, instead of it, the service of God is commonly performed with the dry, dead bones of empty forms, and lifeless words. Still, I am disposed to believe, that, in tender and feeling hearts, there is much more of affectionate yearning after communion with God, than people in general are aware of. There is an illustration of this as a fact, in the following passage which I extract from the "Table Talk"\* of Mr Rogers :—

"Do you ever say your prayers ?" asked Plunkett of Grattan.

"No, never."

"What, never !—neither night nor morning ?"

"Never ; but I have aspirations all day and all night long."—(Page 173.)

We find this inward and spiritual view of religion chiefly in the works of the mystics ; the only religionists whose writings are of any use to me,

\* Published by Moxon, 1856.

because they are the only people who recognise the Divine Being as ever present and ever acting in their own souls. This is just the place where He is wanted, and where His agency must be felt to render it operative for the individual's comfort and instruction. I am often struck with the utter uselessness of their religious views to the greater part of people, as it respects the state of their mind and feelings ; and should be at a loss to understand it, if I did not remember how it was with myself for many years of my life, and how it is, I believe, with everybody, till, by some severe stroke of affliction, they are drawn or driven to turn their attention inward, and seek their devotion in the secret of their own hearts. I daresay that most persons who pretend to any observance at all of religion, would say that it is in their own hearts they do look for its aid, but the fact is quite otherwise. The plain truth of the matter is, that people in general do not know, and cannot even conceive, what the act of seeking the presence and agency of the Spirit of God in their own souls means. In point of fact, they do not know what the idea of God means. How should they, when the instruc-

tion they have received on that great subject leads only to their forming a set of notions that God is a Being whom they ought to acknowledge as the maker of heaven and earth, and worship after the mode of worshipping which is practised at the church or chapel they attend ; and that, besides this public act of devotion, they should read the Bible, and say their prayers night and morning, and observe the Sabbath by doing no work, and reading no novels or newspapers on that day. All this put past ; there's an end on't, and very glad they are that it is ended. I was, at least when such was the fashion of the religion I followed, which was the religion in which I was educated, and in which I lived till I was five and thirty. Undoubtedly, there is much more spiritual instruction imparted at places of worship, and in religious teaching by books, than was the case in my youthful days. Sixty years ago, when I was eighteen, there was only Mr Simeon who bore the character of an evangelical preacher at Cambridge, my native and then dwelling-place ; and Mr Simeon and his followers, (who were recognised as " Trinity Church folks,") were regarded by me, and all my

associates, as people quite removed from the pursuits, the sympathies, and one would almost say, the common nature of the parishioners of every other church in the town. Why this happened, I neither knew nor cared; nor did anybody else, I believe, of my acquaintance. It was enough for us that this was the case, and that we had nothing to do with Trinity Church, nor Mr Simeon. The Sunday works put over, we started fresh the next day, with renewed eagerness, on the real point and purpose of our hearts, which was to have as much enjoyment of the world as we could. Here was our heart, and here our faith; for here were the things that we saw and felt, and imagined we could put trust in. Happily for me, they soon gave way, and the mercy of God having granted me a belief in, and love of, the *real* in the things I had to deal with, I very early in my day turned to religion. In my first steps into this path, it so happened that this very Mr Simeon, whom I had held so cheap, was made of great service to me, as I have stated at some length in a work published by me some years since.\* I do not now view the

\* Reminiscences of Thought and Feeling.

ministry by which I was then greatly helped, as of the kind to build up and establish the mind, after the manner in which that of the mystics is so strengthening. But, in its time and place, I found it of great value, and remember it with respect and gratitude.

#### CHAPTER IV.

I SOMETIMES feel oppressed and dissatisfied with the exceeding loneliness of my lot ; but only at intervals, and but for a short time. A few minutes of inward stillness suffice to let the cloud pass over, and then the blessed light in which I am able to see things in their true nature, shows me that this isolation is the highest favour, and a token of the Divine Wisdom of the Providence that has appointed it. Unable as I am, from want of early and proper training in habits of self-government, to keep the tight rein which is needful over a nature so restless, so eager, so hungry for excitement as mine is,—with the means, too, in my power of indulging it,—where and what should I have been but a spendthrift of all the best faculties with which the goodness of God had gifted me, if I had had any companion at hand to second



and assist my propensity to run out after every enticing object that caught my fancy? "Oh, but you might have set bounds to the gratification of your fancy," some people will say. "You need not have gone beyond reasonable limits in your pleasures." True enough, I need not. Neither need any rational beings transgress the law of reason in the gratification they give to their own will. But, unhappily, the fact is, that reason is found, for the most part, an insufficient protector in defending us from ourselves, for, as is only too truly said by Pope respecting this faculty—

"Ah, if she lend not arms as well as rules,  
What can she more than tell us we are fools;  
Teach us to mourn our nature, not to mend,  
A sharp accuser,—but a helpless friend."

I am disposed to think, that it is with many minds, as it is with many bodies amongst human beings; and, that just as some of them are, by their physical nature, so liable to inflammatory disorders, that the least excess in diet throws them into a fever, or exposure to the weather into a hazard of catching cold; so, in some minds, there is such a tendency to inflammatory action on the emotional side of their being, that they are only safe, as

the physically feeble people are only safe, by guarding themselves on every side against such things as disturb the low, simple, and uniform method by which they are obliged to manage themselves, in order to maintain their bodily or spiritual health. As a vast and blessed help towards keeping myself on the best possible regimen for securing interior repose and mental equilibrium, (and where is there a possibility of happiness without these tokens of spiritual health ?) I find my condition of solitude priceless in value. Temptations to be restless, and to go here, or go there, usually for no object but to get or to do something which, not being wanted, or not needful to do,—perhaps, better undone,—is almost sure to be regretted—these are snares which lose much of their power (with me, at least, they do) when no one is near, to whom the incipient wish to be in action can be imparted. For how sure, how *very* sure, would the utterance of the words, “I have half a mind to go to town to-day,” especially if addressed to a complaisant associate, and no other sort of associate would have been at my side, how certainly would it have elicited the reply of, “It would do you good ; you

want a little change," &c. That this restlessness is peculiar to humanity, we may safely infer from observing how it operates upon children. From the time of its beginning (as the nursery phrase goes) "to take notice," the waking hours of a healthy child are little less than a perpetual torment to itself and those who have the charge of it, except as its craving for amusement is fed by the toys that are given it. And these are usually but a momentary solace, being thrown down as soon as the excitement of the first glance, or grasp at them is over.

"Oh, but this is only because it is a child," people say. "By and by, it will know better."

It will know better how to conceal its childish will and wishes, I grant. The discipline of education will have enforced some self-restraint, and the force of circumstances, when education is ended, will, most likely, be its protector from becoming the victim of self-will ; happily for the larger part of the human family, this force of circumstances pursuing them like their shadow, and perpetually intervening to hinder their doing as they like. But let this check be removed, and the means of self-

gratification put in their power, and the child playing with a knife, is not in a more hazardous position than they are. Now, it is not so with the animal creation. The young amongst them are quite sufficient for their own amusement. A kitten will play with a cork by the hour together, and be a thing of joy to itself, and a source of innocent mirth to everybody about it, without pining for toys, and plaguing a poor nurse-maid, till she exclaims in her misery, "What *do* you want, you tiresome child?" Ay, nurse, that's just the problem hard to solve, "*What DO you want?*"—a problem which you yourself would find it difficult to work out, when you feel dissatisfied with your condition of servitude, and are longing and looking to get out of it. No doubt, you believe that if this were the case, you would be quiet and contented. Yes, just as much, and just as long, as baby is contented with the toy you give him.

It is not till experience, and something better than that,—even a measure of divine light and truth has sanctified our experience, that we get to discover, that this appetite of the mind is a part of its nature; and one which can only be prevented

from becoming a source of torment, as it is supplied with its proper provender, which is "the bread of truth." "But, do you expect that the nurse, whom you apostrophise, is likely to find and feed upon this provender?" No, indeed; I have no such expectation. Mrs Nurse, and everybody else must be content to endure as best they may, and satisfy as best they can, the conditions of their nature, which, sooner or later, in some way or another, I feel well persuaded, that the mercy of God will ameliorate, and bring to ultimate purification and peace.

## CHAPTER V.

AS I was passing this morning by the Asylum for the Insane, an immense establishment very near my house, a carriage was driving in, and the large entrance doors, which are usually kept closed, being set wide open for its admission, I had an opportunity for seeing the pretty garden profusely filled with flowers, the handsome front and mansion-like look of the building, and of gathering materials for going on my usual walk in the Lyndhurst Road, with my head full of reflections. Here were all "appliances and means to boot," I thought, for the amelioration of the heaviest calamity with which human nature can be afflicted. But wherefore and whence can such an affliction come? I can understand the misery that people bring upon themselves by violating their reason; but to be divested of reason itself,

and that from no fault, no cause attributable to the unhappy sufferer, is not that strange—and sad as strange—and totally bewildering to think of? After a short interval of inward silence, there came before the view of my mind, a sight and sense of the nature of things in this world by no means new to me, for it is of long acquaintance; but I think it presented itself to-day with unusual vividness to my thoughts, that this world is the property,—the absolute property, and lawful inheritance of an evil spirit. That we have the authority of Scripture for believing this, I need but name the texts which speak of “the prince of this world,”\* “the god of this world,”† and “the rulers of the darkness of this world.”‡

We read of an evil being recognised as “the devil,” who “abode not in the truth.”§ At one time, then, he had a habitation in it, and, therefore, in a celestial kingdom; from which, with his company, we may, from the statement at Jude 6, conclude that he was cast down.

Jacob Behmen, or Böhm, as I believe I ought

\* John xii. 31.

‡ Eph. vi. 12.

† 2 Cor. iv. 4.

§ John viii. 44.



to say, states—and that not hypothetically, but as what he had received in a way of divine inspiration—that this world in which we have our dwelling, was originally the glorious celestial kingdom of Lucifer and his angelic associates ; all good and happy beings, and as such participating in, and enjoying, the riches and delights of eternity. But, using their power of self-will in admiring themselves, and in indulging ambitious desires of having an existence and scope of being independent of that prescribed to them by the will of their Creator, purposing, in short, to be as gods to themselves, they fell at once into an *own* life, and a condition of self-hood, by which they found themselves and their once glorious kingdom shattered into the darkness and confusion of chaos.\* The light, love, and life of God being withdrawn from them, nothing was left in their nature but the fierce elements of fire, and wrath, and pride, and covetousness, and envy, and every hateful emotion of self-hood, which makes it such a source of torment, till its bitterness is ameliorated

\* “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning !” (Isaiah xiv. 12.)

by the sweetness of the divine life. On this ruined kingdom of Lucifer's, according to Jacob Böhm, the mercy of God descended as the Creator of a new world, out of the spoiled materials of the former one; but not, as it would seem, to the expulsion of its original possessors, who have a *right* to the domain, and one which, it would appear, that they exercise with very great and lamentable success, in so far, at least, as consists in their obtaining immense influence in stimulating the human beings who are placed in their fallen kingdom, to revolt from the authority of God, and seek their happiness in a life of self-hood.

Without undertaking to judge how far honest Jacob's views are true or fanciful, I must say that they seem to me to give something approaching to a solution of the vast and fearful problem of the origin of evil. Be this, however, as it may, one thing is certain, that to every human soul that yearns for deliverance from the spiritual evil which tempts and troubles him, there is redemption to be found as near to him as is the foe that assaults him. Only let him mind the first rule, and take the first step on which this redemption is founded ;

only let him dread as his worst, most pressing, and most unceasingly present enemy,—his own will, his own fleshly life of *self*,—and learn to deny it ; only let him believe in and obey the shining of that light in his conscience which is given as his guide and saviour in this terrible dwelling-place—this “waste howling wilderness,” through which he must travel to a happier habitation, and all will be well with him, and he may defy the devil and all his works.

## CHAPTER VI.

**O**PPOSITE to my suburban dwelling there resides a French artist who takes photographic portraits ; and a young friend of mine having often asked me to sit to him for mine, I, this morning, made him a visit for that purpose.

I have so perfectly outlived the idea of its being possible for a woman of nearly eighty looking any otherwise than grim and repulsive in a picture, that I really felt ashamed of presenting myself for the purpose of having myself so represented, and explained to M. Rousseau how anything so preposterous happened to occur. He evidently could not comprehend me ; the matter of old age being a thing of which, as far as I could judge, he had no conception. Like almost every one else to whom I happen to remark that I am now advanced in life, he treated the case as quite out of the question. I am often struck and also amused

with the uniform resistance that is made to the least allusion to the irresistible fact of growing old. Whenever I touch upon it in conversation, and especially if I happen to add that I have little else to do in this world but to prepare for another,—I usually meet with the reply,—intended, doubtless, to be consolatory and encouraging, of, “Oh dear, no ;—you may live these ten years yet.” And then, as a confirmation of what I may hope for, I am told, generally, of some “father, grandfather, aunt, or uncle, of the speaker, who is five or six years older than I am, who goes about the house as blithe as a lark, and can walk more than a mile every day of their lives.” If I reply to all this, as I commonly do, by saying, that if I thought I had ten years longer to live, it would give me anything but pleasure, for I had had quite enough of this world, and should be glad to leave it whenever my time for dismissal arrived ;—I have observed that a cloud comes over the face of the persons with whom I am talking ; and I can perceive that I forthwith take my place in their estimation as a strange, gloomy, and somewhat disagreeable being.

Such a one I unquestionably should have been reckoned, if the originals of the portraits that filled the artist's room could have known the ruminations of my mind, as, during the interval of waiting till he was ready to attend to me, I mused upon their different presentments.

As I am here reminded that probably the readers of these ruminations might be of their opinion also, I may as well withhold the expression of them. I cannot, however, forbear from expressing in general terms, that I got a lesson out of the circumstance—for it impressed me with a strong conviction that the intense self-consciousness which this display of portraits betrayed, was the most inveterate of all our spiritual diseases.

We may perceive this trait very strongly, and even ludicrously, exhibited in the habit now so common with the lowest classes of society of having, as they style it, "*their pictures taken!*" Scarcely a servant-girl, or an errand-boy, with but a shilling a-week for wages, will grudge the spending a part of their pittance in offering this morsel of incense to their self-consciousness, and self-idolatry. But whilst I was thus musing upon the way in which

this egotistical passion works upon other people, and was, perhaps, though unconsciously, pluming myself upon being delivered from its dominion, I was reminded of a passage in my life in which I had *gone in*, like the vainest of them, to have my picture taken ; intending, like them, to look as delightfully as I could, and hoping and expecting, as no doubt they did, to make a pleasant sensation by showing it to my friends and acquaintances. It is now some five and forty years since this happened, and as I was then, by that long interval, younger than I am now, I was, of course, better adapted to appear to advantage looking out of a picture frame. At all events I thought so :—and to give my dear self every possible chance of success, and being in London at the time, I went to one of the first artists in the crayon line of portraits, (which was the one I made choice of,) and I paid a tolerably large sum, I remember, to Mr Slater, for the whole concern, which included the framing and glazing.

On taking it home with me to Cambridge, without the least recollection of the vanity of such an act, I hung it up in my sitting-room,



where, together with myself, it remained to receive such tokens of admiration as might happen to be cast into the *hat*, which, pretty much as the crossing-sweeper does, (only I think he is the more respectable party in the act,) we thus held out to receive them. Whenever a woman places herself upon a pedestal, and attitudinizes, there is always one person in particular whom she has in view, whose interest and admiration she especially desires and expects to excite. It was so with me on this occasion. Not one atom did I think or care about the impression which the picture might make upon anybody else. But here,—oh, *here*!—the result was infolded in I cannot tell you what a number of rainbow hues. The dreams—the dramas my imagination and I rehearsed of what he would do—and what he would say respecting this picture—are not to be told. In due time he returned to college, for he was away at the first exhibition of this testimony of my vanity. He was not my lover, nor ever likely to be; for he was a person who had long settled down upon a single life as that of his decided preference and adoption; added to which he was old enough to

be my father ; and in kind offices of earnest and affectionate friendship, had been more than a father to me. But it was not as my father that I wanted him to gaze and smile upon this picture ; for fancy and I had portrayed him as gazing and smiling at it just as a man might be expected to do who says in his heart,—“ If I had been thirty years younger, the original of that picture would have been more to me than she is now.”

And here, to exonerate myself from the exceeding folly which such notions, wholly unwarranted by anything approaching to fact, may seem to indicate, I may say, that occasionally a chance word of sympathy and affection, dropped as it were from the strong excitement induced by looking upon the painful circumstances that enveloped my early life, did, and not unreasonably, awaken a sweet idea that there was something of a warmer feeling towards me at the bottom of my old friend's heart. I never for a moment expected it to develop into anything of a serious kind. I knew my man a great deal too well for that. But to have it there at all, —to have the least atom of ground for thinking

that he had a bit of a fight to make,—*not* to let himself love me,—oh, this *was* sweet food for fancy to feed upon!

And so, as I have said, did fancy and I feed and feast, till fact (what a disagreeable thing a fact sometimes is!) came and overturned the table at which we had placed ourselves for our banquet.

The usual interchanges of talk having passed, when my friend made his first call after his return to college, he walked up to the picture and looked at it earnestly a few moments, but without the least trace of the expected smile. On the contrary, his look was so grave that I felt as if an ice-bolt had been shot into my heart. “I don’t think you consider it a likeness?” said I, finding that he kept silence.

“I know that it is meant for you,” he replied; “but if I had seen it anywhere else, I should not have guessed it.” After again looking at it for a few moments, “It is nicely done,” he said; “one sees a master’s hand at a glance. He has done the best he could;—but the fact is, that yours is not a face for a picture. No face is which has not some prominent feature and marked expression in

it. Such a face, for instance, as So-and-so's," and he named a person known to us both. "There," said he, "is a face that would make a picture speak. But you have no such marked expression in your face." More he said—but this was enough—and more than enough, when, just as he was taking leave he said,—“I think, if I were you, I would not have that picture hanging up in my sitting-room. I know *you* are not actuated by vanity in doing so; but there are plenty of ill-natured people who would be likely to say that you were.”

You may rely upon it that before my friend had got to the end of the street, the picture was taken down, and in order to get it out of my sight, I made a present of it to one of my relations.

## CHAPTER VII.

IN turning this morning to the letters of Gerhard Tersteegen, I was struck by this remark of his to a correspondent:—"I often think that if we that are awakened would only endure four years of probation in silent mortification and prayer before we showed ourselves publicly, our subsequent activity would be a little purer and less injurious to the kingdom of God both externally and internally. The flesh and its progeny, which finds a life of mortification too strait for it, and too disagreeable, may breathe very easily, and even maintain itself in every outward spiritual and apparently profitable exercise; whilst, in the meantime, the mystery of iniquity at the bottom, remains unperceived and unmortified."

I know, from my own experience, how prompt is the impulse to be *doing* in a way of working

or talking about spiritual things, as soon as there is a new apprehension of them ; and that, under a notion of *being made useful* to our fellow-creatures, we are apt to indulge much more of our natural pride and self-conceit in taking upon ourselves the province of teachers, than we are at all aware of. I had been so deeply imbued with the habit and love of writing, and had so much time upon my hands, that I felt a kind of necessity of continuing that occupation after Mr Simeon had influenced me to give up novel-writing. I felt that I *must* write,—there was no question about that. The question was, “ *What* may I write ? ” Sermons, to be sure ; or religious essays.

“ Religious Thoughts ” seemed to be a nice title, and no doubt I could produce a nice work to fit it. So I forthwith set about it, and when my book was finished I read some of it in manuscript to Mr Simeon, who expressed a good opinion of it ; as did a few other people. But, on the whole, it fell to the ground, though stated on the title-page as by the author of “ The Favourite of Nature.” As I published it at my own expense,

of course I lost money by it, but I gained some experience that was worth its price; for I was made to perceive, that if I meant to preach, I must look for a very circumscribed circle of readers, and be prepared to forego all fame and profit from my literary labours. I was not quite sufficiently grounded in my religious views to feel the indifference which I ought to have done at this result; but, after a time, and when I had been subdued by some sharp trials, I was enabled to regard my "Religious Thoughts" as, under the guise of devotional stimulus, wearing, in point of fact, though at the time undetected by me, so much of the old leaven of vanity,—so much of the old Adam in canonicals, that I could scarcely bear to look at the book; and I am sure I could not now write such a one. I should prefer writing in a strain as droll and entertaining as much of what I have been reading in the "Life of Father Matthew." The peculiar eccentricity of the Irish nature, as developed in various of its details, exceedingly amuses, and at the same time I may say, that it affects me; inasmuch as it revives so vivid a remembrance of traits in my poor father's



character and habits, which at the time made me angry and often disrespectful in my behaviour to him, that I can only lament I had not known better how impossible it was for him, as an Irishman, to be otherwise than he was.

“What a solution you give me,” said a person once to me, when I happened to remark that I had the Irish nature in me on my father’s side; “what a solution of so much in you, that it always puzzled me to understand.”

“I don’t wonder at that,” I replied, “for I am often puzzled to understand myself.”

But, truly, I do think that the incongruity in the individual’s character seems more remarkable when, as in my own case, there is a mingling of the English nature with the Irish. I always say that I could make two hemispheres of my interior state, and draw a line, to a hair’s-breadth, of the temperament I inherit from my parents. My mother was not only English, but very English in her nature. Reserved with strangers, loving quiet, orderly, averse to change her habits, firm, to a degree of obstinacy, in holding her opinions, and hating with perfect hatred all sudden and

violent doings ; never herself setting about anything, or liking to see any one else set about things in a hurry. She was, in short, the very antipodes of my father, who was always in a hurry. One word is enough to describe him—he was Irish, and very Irish. Having these two opposite influences to operate upon me, I am persuaded that the Irish part of me shows to much greater prevalence, and often produces to observers much greater surprise than it would do, if it stood unchallenged and unmitigated by my mother's share in me ; whilst the conflict to myself between the wildness of the Irish impulsiveness and the English repose, and unwillingness to be active and forward, is often really painful, though, as where anything Irish is concerned, it is sometimes extremely ludicrous. All that can be said, is, that we must bear with our own inconsistencies, and fight the good fight. I sometimes think and hope that great allowance will be made in the final award for those that have Irish blood in their veins.

## CHAPTER VIII.

MY dear old friend, Professor Smyth, had very little patience with people who talked about the wretchedness of this world—its being a “vale of tears”—and so on. He always said that, for himself, he had led a very cheerful life; and should be glad, if it were possible, to live it over again.

He was very much a man of system; and I make no doubt had constructed a plan by which to get as much enjoyment out of life as it was capable of affording.

It was his avowed conviction, that in order to be established in the course of cheerfulness, which he considered the *summum bonum* of earthly good, we must, as much as possible, abstain from anatomising the affairs of life; and keeping to a habit

of *touch and go*, act as the bee does, when, hovering over a bed of flowers or herbs, she extracts what sweets they offer, and is off. Thus he did himself with the circumstances that presented themselves to his notice. He did not stop to probe their origin, or ask any questions about them. It was enough for him that he had so drawn out the chart by which he was to travel, that only people and things that promised well from their talents their position, and their surroundings, were such as he meddled with. All this providing for his own particular comfort, he considered to be not only allowable, but a measure of wisdom and prudence,—as, looking only to the things of time and sense, it undoubtedly was. “We were placed here,” he would sometimes say to me, when, from a nature and a home-atmosphere as opposite to his as darkness is to light, I have spoken of life as a scene of sorrow, as, God knows, for the greater part of my acquaintance with it I found it to be; “we were here,” he would observe, “to make the best use we could of our opportunities, and their influences, whether as it related to mental power, or to society, or to anything else

that acted on our minds, and could be serviceable to their improvement and happiness ; and the first step in turning things to account, was always to make the best of them, and this was to be done by overlooking, as much as possible, the evil, and getting all the good out of them which they possessed."

*He* could do this ; for, in the mode of existence which fell to his lot, it was peculiarly practicable ; seeing that it was of a kind which he could mould and manage as he liked, in order to make it assimilate with his determination to enjoy a cheerful life. As a fellow of a college, and filling the chair of the best professorship in the university, his position was, at once, well defined and distinguished, and he was free from all disturbing desires of rising higher. There were no domestic cares to trouble him ; and as he possessed a calm and equable temperament, it was not difficult for him to stand aloof from all the storms and shipwrecks which follow the fortunes of the restless and the impassioned part of mankind. And thus it happened, that, up to the age of seventy, at which I believe he had arrived when he said, "*I have lived a very*

*cheerful life,"* &c., he could give that pleasant testimony with perfect truth and satisfaction. But there was a long era yet before his course was ended; for he reached the age of eighty-four; and, as far as I could learn, this was a period of great trial, and that on the side of his nature and habits, which was of the most importance in promoting the cheerfulness which he regarded as the right aim of the human being to obtain and preserve; and which he had himself so especially endeavoured to do. Now, I am not saying that he was wrong in acting thus, considering the stand-point from whence he regarded human life, and the principles of guiding it aright. But I question the rectitude of his stand-point—I consider it to be one from which the deductions he made could not fail to deceive him. For, but few things could be more erroneous I conceive, and testify more surely to some misapprehension of the right lessons to be learned in our passage through the world, than any old person's wishing to live his life over again. Widely different is the testimony of Mrs Barbauld, given in her eightieth year, and which runs in this wise :—

“ Say ye, who through this round of fourscore years  
Have felt its joys and sorrows, hopes and fears ;  
Say, what is life ;—ye veterans who have trod,  
Step following step, its flowery, thorny road ?  
Enough of love and fancy, joy and hope,  
To fan desire, and give the passions scope ;  
Enough of disappointment, sorrow, pain,  
To seal the wise man’s sentence all is vain,  
And quench the wish to live those years again.”

There was a mistake in the estimate which the professor made of the proper purpose of life ; for he overlooked the re-action which always accompanies a state of happiness ; and which, for the wise purpose of causing us to “rejoice with trembling,” is ordained to occur in every human destiny. It is so fixed a fact that a period of enjoyment will be succeeded by one of suffering, that reflecting and religious persons have a secret dread of an unusual state of felicity. I remember, that in the life of Dr Arnold, in a letter written but a short time before his sudden and unexpected death, he mentions having just returned from Fox How, “after a few weeks of awful happiness.”

In the life of Lacordaire it is stated that when he was preaching with immense success at Lyons, a friend one day discovered him “kneeling before



his crucifix, with his head in his hands, absorbed in prayer, which was interrupted by his sobs." On inquiring the cause, "I am afraid," replied Lacordaire, "of this success."\*

The professor was not by any means to be considered as an irreligious man ; he was much too wise and prudent, and too well aware of the duties that belonged to his place in the creation as a rational being, not to have some established principles on the subject of religion. But I consider them, like his other practical principles, to have been only the deductions of a calm philosophical mind, which looked to the real, and the reasonable, and the immediately useful, in its views of life, and adopted only those which suggested the right path through the labyrinth of this world.

That it was

"A mighty maze, but not without a plan,"

he would readily have conceded ; but, at the same time, he would have asserted that our business was to discover the best way of threading "the maze," and not to concern ourselves about "the plan,"

\* The Inner Life of Lacordaire, p. 372.

which was obviously beyond our capacity to fathom. All this might suffice whilst his faculties of enjoying society lasted ; but for the trial of deafness, which embittered the latter period of his life, he was, as I have been told, but ill prepared, and therefore it was acutely felt by him.

“Don’t ask me,—pray don’t ask me,” a lady told me was his reply, when she was urging him to come to a music party at her house, at which a celebrated vocalist was to perform. At hearing this, I could have wept, to think of the dismal alteration which time must have made in the chief enjoyment of my dear old friend, before he could have begged not to be asked to a music party !

For more than a year previous to his death, he took entirely to his bed ; not, as I understood, from any need of doing so, but, I imagine, to keep his mind prepared for the great change at hand, it being a prominent trait in his common-sense view of things, to be ready for whatever was inevitable. As it is “out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaketh,” the thought of one so long and so intimately associated with the earlier part

of my life,—one to whom I owed so much at that period, not merely as my friend, but in no slight measure as my educator, has often so deeply impressed me, and especially in connexion with his remark of “*I have lived a very cheerful life*,” that I feel it a relief to throw off some of the reflections thus suggested.

They are not, I confess, of a cheerful character, and strange as to some minds such a preference may seem, I would rather adopt, as nearer the truth than the professor’s summary of what life had done for him, this testimony of Dryden’s :—

“ When I consider life, ’tis all a cheat,  
Yet, fool’d by hope, men favour the deceit—  
Trust on, and think to-morrow will repay ;  
The morrow’s falser than the former day—  
Lies more ; and when it says we shall be blest  
With some new joy,—cuts off what we possess.  
Strange cozenage : None would live past years again,  
Yet all hope pleasure from what still remain,  
And, from the dregs of life, think to receive  
What its first sprightly runnings could not give.  
I ’m tired of waiting for this chymic gold,  
Which fools us young, and beggars us when old.”

## CHAPTER IX.

I HAVE just finished reading the Memoirs of Baron Bunsen by his widow ; a book which has deeply occupied my mind for the last fortnight.

I began it with the purpose of reading it straight through ; but the continual divergence from domestic details, and the portraiture they exhibit, which I love,—to subjects of politics, which I hate,—soon prompted me to skip over, perhaps, the greater part of these ponderous volumes. Much of what I did read, greatly interested, and, I think, instructed me, though it was more by the contrast it exhibited between my own views of human life, and those which seem to have been the views of Bunsen, than any sympathy which I had with them.

That he was a man of a singularly ardent, active, happy temperament, full of healthy hope-

fulness, and joyous anticipations of success in whatever he undertook, is strikingly manifest. Nothing morbid, nothing low or mean, nothing but what was manly, and worthy of a man, and a man exalted by position as well as by nature, is to be traced as characteristic of him from one end to the other of this memoir.

Perhaps, when the task of recording it fell to the hand of one to whom he was so near and dear, it was scarcely possible that the traits of his mental superiority should not be somewhat too radiant. Dr M'Cosh, in an extract from one of his works inserted in this memoir,\* observes, "Respected and beloved by all, except the enemies of civil and religious liberty, his (Bunsen's) speculations, philosophical or theological, carried, I found, very little weight in Germany."

I should expect, that with persons whose habits of thought inclined them to cultivate inward and spiritual views of truth, his writings would not find acceptance. I know nothing of them, and have no wish to know anything. The impression of his nature left upon my mind by

\* Vol. ii. p. 473.

this memoir, is significant of so much eagerness and restlessness, and such a perpetual *rushing out* of mind, that I cannot conceive it possible he should have been acquainted with religion in its interior and mystical aspect, which is the only aspect of it that I love to contemplate. So far, therefore, from desiring to read any of his books, or to study the subjects he is for ever talking about, I turn over page after page in this biography, as fast as I can, to get away from them. The simple, single eye, that fills the whole body with light—not a groping curiosity after the dead and buried bones of antiquity—is the thing which I love and long for. What does it matter to me, or to any one else, what king of Israel reigned at Jerusalem three or four thousand years ago, or what was either his name or nature? but it matters much for the benefit of my mind that I should drink in the little drippings of living water which here and there gush forth from the pages of the Bible.

Bunsen's dying ejaculation, "Let us walk in the light of the Eternal!" remains with me, as does also the painfully interesting account of his last

hours. One would then not lose the smallest portion of his utterances, though all that he has said in the day of health and strength, touching his *bibelwerk*, and his other literary projects, may be easily passed over.

There is something very affecting, reminding one of "a song in the night, when a holy solemnity is kept," in the prostration of so active and energetic a mind as Bunsen's on a lingering death-bed ; but, at the same time, the calm and divine instruction it is well fitted to impart is very precious. Here we see every thought and desire centred and absorbed in the great but simple reality—the act of dying—the greatest of all realities ! and the testimony which he gives forth at that time in the words, "Now, first, one begins to perceive what a dark existence it is that we have here passed through,"\* is a lesson never to pass away, in its influence over a thoughtful mind. Sad indeed is it, but true as it is sad, that, as some old Puritan divine observes, "We learn how we ought to have lived about half-an-hour before we die."

\* Vol. ii. p. 572.



This great mistake is made by persons proceeding from childhood to old age, as they most of them do, without any faith in the perpetual presence and power and inflexible agency of spiritual truth. They have the most implicit confidence in the facts of the multiplication table ; and base their commercial dealings, without a doubt, upon what *they* propound ; but only suggest that the law of moral truth is quite as certain and immutable as that of numbers, and they will laugh you to scorn as a fanatic. The consequence of this infidelity in the spiritual and invisible world of mind, is the inevitable one of a want of government, and a want of repose in the inner man. Where there is no faith in a ruling principle of conduct, there is nothing to fall back upon in moments of trial and temptation, but the power of pride, which prompts to a regard to character, to appearance, and other matters that lie on the surface. I shall not attempt to depreciate the power of pride ; for, in the absence of religious principle, I think it is of immense value ; and have not the slightest doubt that it acts as a protecting and elevating force upon more than

half the world. But it is a hard, often a cruel, always a selfish and unamiable quality. It has its use, no doubt; and so have a great many other ugly feelings in human nature; but it has not within it the elements of truth and peace; and never did, and never can, make anybody happy. Nothing can do this but mental repose, founded on acquaintance with Truth, which is only another word for—God. “Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace,” (Job xxii. 21.) But how is this acquaintance to be formed? Where, and with what, must we commence as its foundation? We must educate the young, and seek to establish them in sound, religious principles, would be the general answer; and a very wise and proper one to this query. But then comes another, respecting which there would be unanimity enough in the replies it would elicit. To the question, “What is the best method to adopt in trying to establish them in religious principles?” I dare say all classes of religionists would reply, “They must be well grounded in acquaintance with the Word of God—or, in other words, the Bible.”

Now here, as I conceive, the whole *gist* of the matter lies. I will be bold to say, that no one loves more than I do, or more frequently feeds upon, the precious truths that are stored in the Bible ; but it is something nearer to me, and more living, that I recognise as the Word of God ; and which, as an "*engrafted*" power, I am to know as "able to save my soul," (James i. 21.) That this is the principle to form, and establish, in the process of education, is plainly set forth in the words of the Psalmist : "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts ; and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom." Now, "truth in the inward parts,"—truth perceived, and believed in, from a feeling sense of it *in the conscience*,—this, and this alone, is the proper and sufficient basis on which to form a well-principled being. The instruction usually given at national schools, and most other educational institutions, in so far as it is of a religious character, consists in reading and learning by heart certain portions of the Scriptures, and hearing them expounded, much after the fashion of the Church Catechism. The result is just what

might be expected,—that, as far as the “inward parts,” in which truth is desired of the Lord, and “the hidden part,” in which He is pleased to impart wisdom, are concerned,—they are as untouched and disregarded by the school-boy and girl, as to their *feeling* the power of what they read, or write, or hear, or repeat, as the way in which they were each of them made “a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven,” was ignored by them at their infant baptism. As babes, as youths, as adults, all this phraseology is a bundle of words without any other meaning than something to be learned ;—perhaps, as something to be productive of benefit in a reward. Sharp-witted boys and girls will soon get a knack of answering glibly the questions of a school inspector, and obtain thereby the prize of a Bible or Prayer-book,—perhaps both,—not, probably, that they care a rush for them as books to refer to. “Jack Sheppard,” or “The Mysteries of London,” would have been to them a gold mine in comparison. It is as testimony to be made useful in promoting the purposes of self-love that these rewards are sought ;

for to read, inscribed in the page of Bible or Prayer-book, that it was "a reward to A. or B. for good conduct at such a national school," would of itself be sufficient testimony to most inquirers after character.

That it is no testimony worth accepting, when taken by itself, I can, from my own experience, affirm ; as it is not long since I sent a girl from my house as a thief, and the most determined liar I ever met with,—an *amateur* in the vice, inasmuch as she indulged in it not merely to screen her delinquencies, but to invent fables for self-aggrandisement ;—and this was a girl who had been eight years at a large national school in the neighbourhood, and had obtained from it a Bible and Prayer-book with her name inscribed in them "*as a reward for good conduct.*"

It is perfectly clear, therefore, that the eight years' instruction of this girl had established her in no principle of religion, or in anything but hypocrisy and falsehood. The great error of almost all the religious instruction imparted to the young, is, that it sets out with the mistake of calling the Bible the Word of God, and, as

such, investing it with the authority which belongs to a superior thing; even that Word of God which was before books were, and will be when they are gone; and which is "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." \*

It is only by an appeal to *that* in the conscience of the human being which witnesses to the existence of this Almighty interior power that is "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword,"—it is only by sounding the key-note of "truth in the inward parts," of which a portion is given in the "true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world,"—it is only, in short, by making religious education heart-work, feeling-work, faith-work, that any principles worth the name of principle can be developed in the youthful mind.

For here again is a fatal error in the work of education, that people almost wholly overlook

\* Hebrews iv. 12.



that it is a process of development, and that it is what is stored *within* the child's mind, not what is poured into it from *without*, that will form the influences that are to govern its conduct. God has given the understanding for intellectual culture ; also the taste or genius for the fine arts ; and in these particular faculties, or in the exercise of them, there is so much scope for promoting the interest of self-love, that young people will often drink in what is offered to them for the cultivation of this side of their nature with great avidity, and thus the development of their respective talents for this or that in the form of personal accomplishment, is a work, comparatively, of much facility.

But it is far otherwise with the development of the divine seed of truth which lies in the conscience. Everything fights against the growth of this faculty. The educators themselves are not prompt in making appeals to it, for those that reprove for particular faults, have need to stand acquitted of practising them themselves. " Thou which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself ? " asks the apostle.



Alas, no ; for by far the greater part of teachers the answers must be NO as it regards the teaching of the conscience. Yet here the whole matter of educating good principles in the child's mind lies. There is nothing formed *there* that is stable and fitted to bear up the mind in its passage through the vicissitudes of life.

But do you mean to say, then, that there is no such thing ever taught or learned as religious principle ? it will be asked.

God forbid I should think or say anything so shocking ! I believe that sound, enduring, religious principles are to be developed out of the soul ; but I think it is the work of God's Spirit to perform it.

On this point, however, there is so much to be said, and I have already prolonged this entry to an unusual length, that I will wait till another day before I proceed with it.

## CHAPTER X.

I SUPPOSE there are few students of the Scriptures who do not sometimes find themselves arrested and impressed by some phrase or passage in them which they must have read and re-read a hundred times, but which seems for the first time to unfold to them the fulness of its meaning. It was thus I was this morning struck with the expression at Romans viii. 21, of "the bondage of corruption." It seemed to me as if I had never before perceived the amazing force of truth, and a terrible truth too, which this phrase embodied. Of what use then, I thought, is all this talk about reform, and popular liberty, and electioneering privileges, and the rest of it? If people are under bondage to their own will, and it is a corrupt, self-loving, self-seeking, self-indulgent will, as that of every ninety-nine out of a hundred may be said to

be, in so far as the power to indulge it extends; what will they do but exercise their extended liberty in extending their own bondage to corruption? Probably nothing else, was the reply of my inward monitor. But you have nothing to do with that. The question for you to ask is, how far, in the exercise of your own will, you have just ground for believing it in some measure emancipated from its house of bondage.

I think that a remark of Mr Cecil's concerning his spiritual condition at the closing period of his life pretty accurately describes my own case. "Bleeding and cauterising," (by which figurative language he means affliction and trials,) "have done much for me, and so has old age."

Still, I feel even yet, if not exactly "the bondage of corruption," enough of its power, to cause a conflict in keeping it in subjection. The insidious nature of self-will causes it to assume such specious forms, that very often it seems not only a lawful, but rather a praiseworthy thing to grant it indulgence. On the subject of books, for instance, when they are of a moral and instructive kind, and the interest they excite is a healthy one, it is

surely more than allowable (if you possess the power) to purchase them if you wish to do so,—and thus reasoning, I go on buying books, very few of which I care to look into a second time.

But why not subscribe to Mudie's, and hire the books you want?

I have done this till I am tired. One does not know what one wants or wishes for in such an amplitude of supply as Mudie offers. I have therefore long since come to the conclusion that I will buy the books I wish to read. It is rather a comfort to me to find that they do disappoint me, and that in this quarter I am broken off, or rather, that one link more is broken that binds me in bondage to the corruption of my own will. I am quite aware that these views which I am here enunciating would sound like foolishness to most persons. But I have lived long enough, and have suffered enough, and have made mistakes more than enough, on the side of allowing my will and wishes what looked like reasonable indulgences, to detect a snare in almost every pleasurable thing that offers itself to my acceptance.

I have often meditated upon those passages in

the Scriptures, chiefly to be found in the Old Testament, which speak of a false deluding spirit "which deceiveth the whole world," and have been led to set great store by them, as infolding in the Oriental way of metaphor, some deep practical truth ; whereas, if regarded in their literal expression, they seem to convey a meaning which has something strange, and sometimes something shocking in it. For instance, the command at Ezekiel, ix. 5, 6 :—

"Go ye through the city, and smite : let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity : slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women : but come not near any man upon whom is the mark."

Whilst I take this in its literal meaning, I can get nothing out of it but what I would rather not get ; but when I regard it as desiring me, in figurative language, to resist to the death, however innocent and harmless it may look, every motion of my self-will which is not sanctioned by the consent or "mark" that conscience sets upon it, I obtain a very profound and useful lesson in the science of self-control.

But are we *never* to yield the smallest indulgence to will or wish ? you ask.

Well, I can only answer as it respects myself ; but mine, from inward nature and outward circumstances, is so peculiar a case that I scarcely think it right to make it a general precedent. A life of loneliness is so undefended from the inroad and dominion of those wishes and fancied wants of self-hood, which, in the bosom of family claims, are necessarily somewhat restrained, that it demands unusual care to keep it in proper subjection. Assuredly, when I look back upon the long vista through which I have travelled, I can clearly discern that the periods of it which have been most favourable to my spiritual health and strength, have been those in which, by suffering of mind or body, I have been the most disinclined and incapacitated for the gratification of my will for even what might be deemed allowable indulgences.

Some words which I met with in the letters of Isaac Penington many years since, and which, I suppose, he might have addressed to much such a person as myself, have remained with me as a

kind of prophecy, which, "whether I will hear, or whether I will forbear," *must* be fulfilled. They were these:—"Thou must die exceedingly, inwardly, and deeply, again and again."

My own case may, as I have just remarked, be a peculiar one ; but I am quite certain that, comparatively but very few, even of religious persons, are in any sufficient degree aware and afraid of the insidious way in which the false spirit that rules in the darkness of the earthly nature embodages them to self-indulgence, and saps the new and better nature which should grow into strength that would enable them to rule and regulate it aright.

The fact is, as I meant to say in what I wrote upon the subject of popular education, that the sincere endeavour to establish a ruling principle of religion in the soul, involves in it a necessity for dwelling under the authority of conscience. Now, conscience is a ruler of a very rigid character, and admits of no evasions, no qualifications, no adapting of its dictates to the desires of the will. It shows the right path, and demands obedience to what it exhibits, which may probably (we may,



perhaps, say certainly, when the will is intensely eager in compassing its wishes) require some sacrifice of inclination.

Hence it usually happens that, except under somewhat rare and healthy conditions of soul, conscience, which ought to be, and is manifestly intended to be, the highest and the most carefully cultivated and revered of all our internal powers, is just that one of them which is most disregarded, in so far as consists in regarding it as a witness for God. It is too close, too inflexible, too piercing a witness, and has too much of divinity in it to be accepted as the arbiter of our conduct, and the source of that which constitutes what we recognise as our religion. It is much more agreeable to have this placed a little farther from us, and thus it happens that people will take up with any sort of religious profession, rather than that which deals with the conscience. In fact, I am persuaded from long and close observation, that just as people shrink and recede from the dominion of truth as witnessed to by conscience in the secret of their souls, so they commonly set themselves to the strenuous observance

of the outward forms and ceremonies of religion ; for, as Bishop Butler well observes, " mankind have in all ages been greatly prone to place their religion in peculiar positive rites, by way of equivalent for obedience to moral precepts."—(" Analogy," p. 165.)

## CHAPTER XI.

I KNEW a shrewd and sincerely pious woman, but plain even to abruptness in expressing her sentiments, who used to cut short all flowery views of "the sweetness of devotional feeling," when she had the least suspicion that the votary of this emotional sense of religion knew little, and wished to know less of it on the side of discipline, by saying, "Ay, ay, all that fine feeling is just embroidery; we don't slide upon our backs into heaven. We must suffer,—we must be turned inside out,—we must be ground to powder, and then the residue of us may be worth something." I am afraid my old friend would have been apt to scout, as too fanciful, any poetical imagery on the subject of self-subjugation; but, for my own part, though as little addicted to the love of spiritual "embroidery" as she herself was, I could not help

taking into my common-place book these lines which I met with the other day, as a help to confirm me in the conviction I have long felt, that it is only by suffering that we are taught and built up in the ways of God—

“ This leaf, this stone, it is thy heart,  
It must be crush'd by pain and smart,  
It must be cleansed by sorrow's art,  
Ere it will yield a fragrance sweet,  
Ere it will shine a jewel meet,  
To lay before thy dear Lord's feet.” \*

The necessity of discipline accompanies us through life, and the greatest of mistakes is made by thinking that it ends with our school-days. The fact is, that the real education which is to be of any use to us only then begins ; for it is only as we are thrown upon our own hands, and emancipated from the control of our spiritual “pastors and masters,” that we begin to understand the value and necessity of having some curb placed upon our nature. And this is a lesson which we are a long while learning ; in fact, it is one that is never learned by some people, in so far as its being reduced to practice is concerned.

\* Goulburn's “Personal Religion,” p. 50.

It is quite certain, and a very sad certainty it is, that there may be the most clear perception and belief in the necessity of self-denial, and at the same time a habit of yielding to the promptings of impulse and inclination, in a way that is ruinous to all establishment in a self-respecting and respectable life. This too common case is touched upon with his usual graphic power by Mr Crabbe, when, speaking of this "bondage of corruption" to which I am alluding, he says—

" 'Tis said the offending man will sometimes sigh,  
And say, 'My God, in what a dream am I!  
I will awake;'—but as the day proceeds,  
The weaken'd mind the day's indulgence needs;  
Hating himself at every step he takes,  
His mind approves the virtue he forsakes,  
And yet forsakes her.—Oh, how sharp the pain  
Our vice, ourselves, our habits to disdain;  
To go where never yet in peace we went,  
To feel our hearts can bleed, yet not relent;  
To sigh, yet not recede; to grieve, yet not repent." \*

The seduction of those things that please the senses is a strange and overpowering mystery; but it is only one amongst a myriad of other mysteries which in our present finite state we cannot understand. This, however, we are soon

\* "Tales of the Hall—Boys at School."

made to understand ; that the seducing and beautiful form in which many objects present themselves to the senses, we must not only disregard, but denounce. No doubt, there are restraints from the force of circumstances,—from the power of pride, and other influences, which may suffice to keep things smooth on the surface, and furnish the check to the earthly mind and will, which we soon find it stands in need of. But this, though valuable as far as it goes, is not the right check—not the right governor. It comes out of the domain of Reason, which is not of itself powerful enough to supply the force that is wanted to govern “those unruly wills and affections of sinful men,” which, in the lines I have just quoted, Mr Crabbe so well describes as their frequent task-masters.

As another poet has said, in reference to the state that must be passed through, and patiently endured, before any radical reform takes place in the case of a penitent—

“ Habitual evils change not on a sudden,  
But many days must pass, and many sorrows  
Conscious remorse, and anguish must be felt,

To curb desire, and break the stubborn will,  
And work a second nature in the soul." \*

"And is it not Reason that acts in this renewal of the nature?" I shall doubtless be asked. To which I reply, "Unquestionably."

"Always," says Dr Whichcote, "apply yourself to the Reason of the thing; for there is an Almighty power in this."

Yes, there is an Almighty power in Reason—a divine light;—but we are to remember that it is a *reflected*, and not a primary light. I do not pretend to give it as originating in any speculations of my own; for I have met with it somewhere in my reading, but I cannot recollect where;—but it seems to me that there is a striking analogy between the two lights of sun and moon, and the light of the Spirit of God, and that of Reason. For, as when things are seen in the radiance of day, they present themselves to observation in their just proportions and right nature; so, when the sun of righteousness makes daylight in the soul, the judgments which it makes of what is offered to it are clear and

\* Rowe.



correct. It sees into the true nature of things, and into the real character of all temptations; and does not mistake evil for good, or bitter for sweet. But, as under the light of the moon, even at its fullest splendour, there is but a cold and shadowy presentation of objects, which often gives them fanciful and distorted forms, very different to their real nature,—so, when the light of reason is the only illumination which governs the mind, its views of things are necessarily obscure, and its conclusions variable and unsatisfactory. Reason, enlightened by the spirit of Truth, shining in the conscience, is an ordained and inestimable faculty, and a precious servant of the soul; but Reason, setting up for herself, and acting only by her own light, is as variable, as cold, and as unfructifying in her operations as the moon, which gives neither warmth nor life to anything.

I can understand nothing of what I see in human beings, but by considering them as to the greater part, to be walking in the moonlight of their reason, a light which, as it respects some of them, is always a mere crescent, scarcely affording a ray of illumination, and never advancing beyond the

poor light that guides their groping and grovelling life of sensuality.

In cases where education, and taste, and favourable influences have acted to elevate the nature, there is a dwelling under an effulgence of light, like that of the moon at the full, and people thus enlightened will write and talk with impressive appeals to the understanding, but not to the conscience—not to the heart and the affections, for the light by which they walk is insufficient to act upon these. *They* must be fructified, as the fruits of the earth are fructified, by the genial light and life of the Great Source of all things.

## CHAPTER XII.

“KEEP your mind active,” was the advice of Niebuhr to a young friend, as I read in a book that lately came into my hands, and which was entitled, “Reminiscences” of him.

“This is just what I ought to do,” I said to myself on reading this. “But what object have I in view on which my mind could spend its activity?”

It was but the momentary querulousness of nature that put so childish a query. A better counsellor promptly repelled it with suggesting that at my age there was but one object which reason, as well as religion, pointed out as that which ought to engage my attention, and exercise my faculties.

“It does do so,” I replied. I think I may safely say there is not an hour in my waking life in which the thought of death is not present with

me ; yet, whilst my mental powers are still spared to me, I cannot but sometimes wish to exercise them in things pertaining to this mortal life to which I yet belong. It may be vanity. A great deal of it, no doubt, is so. But let it be what it may, I possess, or I fancy that I do, a gift of just thought and feeling ; a sense of goodness and of beauty that yearns to diffuse itself somewhere, and in some way. To do anything, in short, rather than vegetate in this state of profitless inanition.

These are not new thoughts by any means ; neither is the answer to them otherwise than familiar, and as forcible as it is familiar to me. It came, as it is wont to do, as I reclined upon my pillow. In the calm stillness of that silent hour, it was in this wise that the inner voice, or, as Adam Smith, in his "Theory of Moral Sentiments," expresses it, "*the man within the breast*," addressed me.

It is true that you have a measure of the divine gift which you describe as a sense of goodness and beauty that yearns to diffuse itself ; but this you have only in common with others ; for it is a

portion of "the true light that lighteth every one that cometh into the world." God has been gracious in granting to you, in addition to this gift, a perception and love of its infinite worth, which is a sentiment of such great value in His sight, that He guards it with peculiar care. In the dispensations of His providence His language seems to be—"I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."\* And how does he do that? How has He done it for you in your life of nearly fourscore years? Has it been by leaving it at your disposal, to scatter and squander in the service of self-love, and as means of feeding the devouring appetite of your soul for this world's fame and profits? Did He suffer you long to be this "empty vine, bringing forth fruit unto yourself,"† in your novels and your musical exhibitions, and all the devices whereby the natural heart, without speech or language, intelligibly proclaims, "I am, and none else beside me," (Isaiah, xlvii. 8.) No,—and for ever NO. It is not thus that the wisdom of God permits the least portion

\* Isaiah xxvii. 3.

† Hosea x. 1.

of that which perceives, and loves, and desires to be united with what is of His own nature, to be trampled under foot by the wild boar of self-hood. Gifts of talent and mental powers are valuable endowments ; but to what vile uses they may be appropriated, if we had no other name than that of Byron to inform us, it might suffice. But we have a multiplicity of such sad and shameful illustrations of desecrated abilities. Yet not many of misused conscientiousness, for God himself is on the side of the human being who recognises HIM ; and who, though fearfully and furiously assaulted with snares and temptations, as it is certain such a one would be from the world, the flesh, and the devil, yet arms himself with faith to fight the good fight, and aims to say with Job, "though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

And there is great need for this earnest and constant trust, whilst the process of purification is going on, and that solemn word is being realised which says, "From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put

within you.”\* Nor must the sorely-exercised soul despond, if many relapses into the old “bondage to corruption” impede its progress to life, and light, and liberty. It has been your own case again and again ; but again and again the snare was broken, and you have been delivered ; and always in the same way ; for there is but one way, and that a way of suffering, in which “a new heart and a new spirit” take the place of the old, unregenerate nature. “Before I was afflicted, I went astray,” says David ; and so also says every saint of God.

What need have you, then, to be talking of an object on which to spend your activity of mind ? Your chief object ought to be to subdue it at every turn, and thus to follow in the track which the Providence of God so manifestly opens up as the path in which you are to travel through the solitary wilderness in which alone it is His good pleasure to meet with you.

\* Ezekiel xxxvi. 25, 26.



### CHAPTER XIII.

THAT my lot of seclusion and solitude is an especial appointment of the Divine will, I have more than the indication of circumstances for believing. If I were to say that more than five and forty years ago, it was distinctly foretold to me,—not by any gipsy fortune-teller, but by a devoted servant of God, occupying the station of a minister of the gospel,—I should, no doubt, be laughed at as a fanatic or a fool. It seems strange, that whilst any kind and degree of attention, and even of faith, will be given to the contemptible exhibition of table-turning, spirit-rapping, and such like mummary, scarcely anything but contempt is awakened by the slightest expression of belief in the agency of God's Spirit, as directing and influencing the soul in any unusual and remarkable manner. A

particular dream may perhaps be related and listened to with something like reverence ; for to dreams almost everybody agrees in attributing something that is occasionally significant of supernatural influence.

But a prophecy ! As if there were such a being now to be found as a prophet ! That is too ridiculous,—too fanatical,—and so on, through all the changes wherewith the arrogant contempt of ignorant infidelity laughs to scorn the simple, humble confidence of the believer in what is spiritual and invisible.

Be it so. I feel, nevertheless, an impulse which I will not resist, to give a place in these pages to a passage in my life which I have never regarded in any other light than as being signally marked as a prophecy. To make it intelligible, I must go into some of the details that attended it. Of these, the most prominent were, the death of my parents, my having to seek a new home, and my being located at the house of a widow lady at Cambridge, who was a highly evangelical professor. By her instrumentality I became known to Mr Simeon, and the *élite* of the religious world

of the place ; and extremely kind many of them were in inviting me to their houses, and extending to me the hand of help, which it seemed to the most sincere and thoughtful of them that my condition most especially needed.

As far as a position particularly exposed to the most fascinating, but at the same time the most fallacious of earthly enjoyments was concerned, few persons could be more perilously circumstanced than at that time I was. The attraction of youth had departed, but at three and thirty, which was my age, there was not much to fear on the score of being too *passée* to be thought of as personally attractive. I may venture to say that on this ground I had still my admirers, and had I been so disposed, might have been married. But, for more than a dozen years previous to this period, I had suffered my affections to fix upon an individual, who might have lived in the moon for any chance I had of his responding to my attachment. No matter ; he was my dear and intimate friend ;—he was something to love and to look to, in the dreary desert of the peculiarly unhappy home wherein my early lot was cast ;

and blessed was the dispensation which made this wild vagary of fancy a protection from the rash step, which my domestic misery would have been only too likely to have prompted me to take, of an imprudent marriage. There was no marriage wanted or wished for by me, whilst I had the friendship and fatherly affection (for he was old enough to be my father) of this beloved one.

Did he know that I loved him? you are desirous, I dare say, of being informed. Certainly not from any lapse of feminine prudence or delicacy on my part, nor yet from any impulsive betrayal of tender feeling. On the contrary, I think that the general tone of my behaviour to this individual, was indicative more of dissatisfaction, and a disposition to quarrel, than of passionate attachment. But is not this the characteristic of feelings of this nature, in minds where the elements of the inferior life are met with the judgment and the rebuke of the superior part? Sharp and constant, you may believe me, was the condemnation which my understanding passed upon the mistake I had made in allowing my affections to fix so hopelessly and so foolishly. Could I

not reason them out of their delusion? Could I not set before them, with a strength of common sense unanswerable in the weight of its arguments, the damage to self-respect—the insane injury to peace of mind—which the indulgence of so preposterous a prepossession produced? Undoubtedly, I could, and I would—and I did. I wrote letters to myself full of such excellent counsel, that the wonder of wonders was, how it came to be wanted. But in vain! Feeling triumphed over reason, and held me its slave and victim. Still, as I have said, it was a wise and merciful dispensation which, by keeping me unhappy, kept me prayerful; and by disappointing my affections as to an earthly object, prepared them to fix where they would meet with no blight, and nothing but joy.

But it is time that I should return from a digression so wide of the point, and into which I have so strangely wandered. It bears, however, upon the aspect of my state at the time to which I refer—a state which was one of the influences of my life, and which in no small measure opened my mind to the reception of religious in-

struction and consolation. I had been at a tea-drinking at the house of a religious family the preceding evening, when I, one morning, received a call from a gentleman who had been of the party, and who was at that time on a visit to a family in the place. He was a person of note in the religious world, as some persons yet living would remember, when I state that he was the Rev. John Simons of Paul's Cray, in Kent. He was a sincerely good man; but eccentric and blunt in his mode of speech to an extraordinary degree; insomuch, that I well remember on the occasion of his visit at this particular time to Cambridge, when some one asked Mr Simeon if Mr Simons would not preach at his church the following Sunday, his replying in the negative. "I love and respect dear Mr Simons," he said, "but I *dare* not put him into my pulpit."

As the party at which I had met him the evening before had been too large, and his conversation too general, to admit of my having any particular discourse with him, he paid me this morning call for more directly personal communication on the subject of religion. It happened

that, when he entered the room, I had a large volume of D'Oyley & Mant's edition of the Bible open on the table, and at a part which was illustrated by a picture. This at once caught his eye, and he had scarcely seated himself before he broke out with a denunciation upon "a pictorial Bible."

"Even the Word of God," he said, "must be made pleasant to the eye, to coax the natural man into reading it."

I assured him this was not the case with me, for I only used this illustrated Bible because I possessed it in the way of inheritance ; it having belonged to my father.

He said no more on that head, but proceeded to explain that the cause of his visiting me was an interest he felt in the statement he had received from a well-wisher of mine as to my particular case. It was one, he said, which he could well understand to be fraught with extreme danger. The notice, and as he was pleased to phrase it, the admiration which my talents procured me, being only so many snares which the devil made use of to draw away my heart from God.



"I hoped not," I said ; and endeavoured to set before him that I thought I might, by the exercise of the gifts of God in a proper direction, do service to Him, instead of being drawn away from Him. He denied the possibility of this whilst I used my gifts in the glorification of myself. "I hoped I did not do this," I said ; but the consciousness of the intense vanity which was rife within me, checked the further repudiation of his remark.

"I might hope," he said ; "but that would do nothing. There was only one thing to be done, if I really wished to belong to God." "I was quite sure that I wished for this," I said. "Then you must make a clean deliverance for yourself," he replied, "by coming out, and being separate from the worldly society which you now frequent, and the incense of flattery with which it feeds you."

"I confess I am not prepared," I said, "to make such a sweeping, and, as it appears to me, such a needless sacrifice."

"No matter," he replied ; "prepared or not, if you are to belong to God, you must surrender all your gifts into His hands." He was proceeding to

point out the utter poverty of mental power and accomplishment to which I must submit to descend, but suddenly checking himself—"However, I will say no more," he said ; "this blessed book shall speak for me," and turning to the Bible, he opened it at the prophecy of Hosea, and pointing to the second chapter, "There," said he, "is your history. There is your present condition, in which the language of your heart, if not of your tongue, is : ' I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink.' This is your determination ; but what says the purpose and will of God to all this ?"

"Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, and shall not overtake them ; and she shall seek them, and shall not find them ; then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now."

"And now," he said, "I will leave you to read and meditate upon this chapter, which I confidently point you to, as what *has* been, and

what will continue to be, your experience in the ways of Providence."

As soon as he departed, I sat down to the perusal of the chapter to which he had referred. With every disposition to profit by it, I was, as yet, far too much enslaved by the enchantments of my position, to apply its language to any personal benefit. In fact, I was not sufficiently acquainted with the mystical mode of the teaching of the Old Testament, to understand the symbolic form in which this prophecy was delivered. It was in after years, when my religious experience had been deepened by accumulated sorrows, that I was enabled to discern, and that with a force of conviction that nothing could shake, that by the hands of John Simons I was favoured to be directed to a prophecy, which the events of five and forty years of my life have signally and blessedly fulfilled ;—events the most adverse that could be conceived to my will and wishes, and to the circumstances which then surrounded me ! For how could I then have supposed—how could I have endured to suppose—that a solitary and a desert wilderness life, as mine has been for the

last five and thirty years, could not only have been endurable to me, but, recognised and accepted as a precious token of Divine love and favour? How could I have conceived the possibility that it was through the overturning and grinding to powder of all that I most prized, and through the fulfilment of the solemn words, "I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her ear-rings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the Lord,"—that I was to be brought to rest and peace, and the love of God?

None can suppose such destruction of the best gifts of Nature to be needed in the passage of the soul from earth to heaven, but those who know—as I, even in that day of ignorant self-worship, had a dim perception of—that these endowments are hindrances instead of helps, to the possession of truth and peace; inasmuch as, by leading the soul to seek its satisfaction in self-hood, they feed that insatiable hunger and covetousness of the carnal mind, which is "enmity towards God." And what is—what, necessarily, *must* be—the state of the

creature that is at enmity with its Creator? *What is it?* Does not every newspaper of every day depict it in the crime, the wretchedness, the distracted ways and means of seeking after enjoyment,—and finding nothing but misery,—in the frequent rushing upon self-murder of which they tell? Truly indeed has the wise man epitomised the common history of Godless humanity, when he says, “Madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.” \*

But God is gracious ;—and in His great mercy uses the very things that Nature says, with one of old, “They are all against me,”—as the means of benefit and blessing. Only let there be a disposition to turn to Him in the time of trial,—only let “the sighing of the contrite heart” go forth in the cry of Hezekiah, “O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me,” and the answer of peace will come, as it came to me, when the visitation of chastisement for “the days of Baalim” was ended.

Then the precious promise was realised which says, “Behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.”

\* Ecclesiastes ix. 3.

“And I will betroth thee unto me for ever ; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies ; I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord.”

Even so!—I do know Thee, my Lord, and my God!—I do know Thee as the Saviour and Redeemer of my helpless soul. I do know Thee through the ever-living, ever-present, ever-speaking instruction of Thine own Spirit ! And oh, how different is this knowledge from that which is gathered from the muddy conceivings of human commentaries on the “letter that killeth”—human notions—human cries of “I am of Paul, and I of Apollos.” Enough for me is it that I am the Lord’s, “chosen in the furnace of affliction,”—allured into the wilderness, there to know the meaning of those divine words, “Thy Maker is thy husband ; the Lord of hosts is His name.” \*

\* Isaiah liv. 5.

## CHAPTER XIV.

I PERCEIVE that in the preceding chapter I have unconsciously wandered into the autobiographical details which, in the very first pages of this record, I so firmly renounced having anything to do with. But I find, in my peculiar circumstances of age and solitude, that in writing as I should think it proper *only* to write, with a view to render my personal experience useful to other minds, it is scarcely possible to avoid an attempt at illustrating that experience with an occasional reference to certain passages in my past history.

Having done so, I wish to obviate the probable mistake which might be made, of concluding that the injudicious, and consequently unhappy attachment of which I have just made mention, presented the precise trial by which I was brought into the wilderness, to "acquaint myself with God,



and be at peace"—by saying that this was not the case. That particular mistake of my life, though of long duration, subsided, or, I should rather say, gave place to another, far more fatal to my happiness in succeeding years. In that to which I have referred, there was no ground for the discomfort it produced, but the wandering of fancy and feeling, which I scarcely believe would ever have occurred, but for the perpetual blight upon my domestic happiness which untoward circumstances occasioned, and which drove me to let out the stream of my strong affections upon any one that took a more than common interest in me. When these unfavourable circumstances were removed, and I came under more genial and expansive influences, the link which, for so long a time, had bound me to a passion which my understanding always recognised as preposterous, gradually loosened, and when I found myself the object of an avowed and ardent attachment to another person, I may say that it was wholly broken.

Of this latter passage in my history I shall say no more, than that it was one which brought upon me more of misery than any other in my life.

The person who professed to love me is now no more; and I wish to say as little as possible in alluding to him. He made a mistake in the matter as well as myself. He fancied that in loving me, he loved a woman whose mental power would ride out all the storms of human life, with triumphant conquest—a woman who, placed by his side, would prove a powerful *aid-de-camp* in fighting with him for all that the world had to bestow of its best in fame, and wealth, and personal distinction. A denizen and disciple of earth himself, he looked for the like in his helpmeet; but he found it not in me. He found little else than a mind enervated by self-indulgence—enslaved by feeling—petulant with natural irritability—captious and exacting,—in a word, a woman with a measure of morbid sensibility, which neutralised her gifts of talent and understanding, by usurping the place of the female dignity, and the self-command, which is in the highest degree necessary on the part of the woman who wishes to retain her proper place in the respect of the man who professes to love her. This was his mistake, and a great one; but it was light in the balance compared with mine;—

as was the distress which it entailed upon him. Not that I would estimate this as by any means insignificant ; for, although a devoted servant of the world, he was a conscientious man ; and, however incapable of sacrificing the prospects and purposes of the most gigantic ambition that ever actuated the mind of man, to a sense of tenderness and compassion that pitied and overlooked the faults by which I teased and troubled him, he could not, without a measure of remorse that I fully believe preyed upon his health to the shortening of his life, hear, as he no doubt must have heard, (for it was only by hearsay he knew anything about me, after I had, in a fit of indignation, dismissed him from my acquaintance,) he could not, I am sure, have heard of me as suffering in health, a bankrupt in happiness, and, through a series of strange melancholy circumstances, bereaved of the companionship of a female friend who resided with me—left alone to bear or battle with my afflictions,—he could not, I am fully persuaded, have known this, without shrinking from “the still small voice,” which would not fail to suggest how large a part of my trial was due to

his hard, ungenerous conduct. I have reason to believe that it did not fail to do so ; and that his dying in an unmarried state was a testimony of his remorse and repentance. In touching on what had so long and strong an influence on my life, an influence which, in the solitude and seclusion to which it led, abides to this day, it seemed necessary, in order to be understood, that I should expatiate a little upon it.

As it respects myself, I could write a volume ; but it would be as vapid and uninteresting a one to other minds, as it would be profitless to my own. It may suffice to say, that this affair imparted a lesson which, I may venture to believe, has never lost its influence ;—a lesson which, by showing me my slavery to the bondage and delusion of the emotional side of my nature, revealed also the inflexible necessity, in order for my emancipation from it, that (as dear Isaac Pennington expresses it) I should “ die exceedingly, inwardly, and deeply, again and again ;” and thus has it been the means of solemnising and strengthening this capacity for discerning and loving divine truth, which the compensating wisdom of God bestowed upon

me, as a balance to poise and preserve my soul, in the extreme danger by which it was threatened of becoming the victim of its own vehemence of passion.

That this lesson can only be properly learned, and practically applied, by the most rigid retirement from the world, and a retreat into the interior depths of the heart, there to keep watch and ward over all its motions, and promptly to arrest and resist those which the wise monitor disapproves of,—I am well assured to be an indubitable truth,—in so far, at least as it respects myself, with whom there is so much to *un*learn as well as to learn. In the case of others, it is not for me to judge ; but, as my old friend used to say, “we do not slide upon our backs into heaven ;” and as a wiser person than she was, has told us, we may rest assured that when we earnestly pray to God for a heart and power to believe in, and belong to Him, it is “by terrible things that He will answer us,” (Psalm lxxv. 5.) Be it so. Strength to endure will assuredly come with the needful trial ; and the storm passed away, the “heaviness that endureth for a night

will be succeeded by the joy that cometh in the morning;" and the purified soul, mounting upwards with a song, will be enabled to say, "Blessed, O Lord, are those whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto Thee: they shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house." \*

\* Psalm lxxv. 4.

## CHAPTER XV.

IT is the opinion of many persons that religion is too sacred a theme to be prominently brought forward when discussing the common course of familiar and what may be termed everyday life. And certainly it would be to desecrate this solemn theme to drag it in, as some persons do, at every turn, as something which it is their duty, or rather, as they mostly phrase it, their "privilege," as religious professors, to propose and propound to whoever comes in their way. I should be sorry that any one should make the mistake of classing me with this company; for the greater part of whom, in so far as my acquaintance with them extends, (and at one time of my life it might be said to be large,) I have the utmost distaste—having usually found that, just in proportion as they were ignorant of, and op-



posed to, the spirituality of true religion, which purifies the heart and keeps the conscience a faithful witness for God;—they were skilful in building themselves up in the doctrines and notions they had picked out of the letter; which, when taken as the primary rule, may truly be characterised as that “which killeth.”

It is well said that “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” There, the renewed and sincere soul feels the presence of that divine truth which makes it free from the bondage of dead words, and causes “the Amen, the faithful and true witness,” which is its interior well-known and well-beloved companion, to respond with joy to the voice of its Creator. But is there anything like this in that which the generality of religious books and of religious talk sets before a soul that hungers for “the bread of life?”

I fear not. I fear that in too many, and what if I say, that in most instances, the request and yearning for bread is answered by the gift of a stone. I do not know anything that acts upon my spirit with the hard, stony, repulsive effect that the dialect of some very high doctrinal teach-

ing and talking does. When it overtakes me in a book, I can pass it over ; and when it comes to me in a letter, I can put it in the fire, which I do with all speed ; but when it meets me face to face in a talker, and I cannot, in common civility, tell him to hold his tongue, nor yet run straight out of the room, I cannot describe the benumbing feeling which it leaves upon my mind, except by saying that I seem for the moment to be transformed into a lump of marble. Practising such strict abstinence, as I do, from the shibboleth in use with these sectarians, it is to be concluded that I am suspected by many, and shunned by some of them, as being what they call “unsound” in my religious views.

It is quite curious to observe the uniformity of demand amongst this class of religionists (who are, one and all, the devout adherents of what Coleridge calls “bibliolatry”) for a particular mode of expression on the subject of religion ; and, whether you feel it to be so or not, a distinct reference to certain prescribed phrases that are supposed to comprehend the marrow of all orthodox divinity. It is not enough that, to avoid a

wrangle, under the name and notion of a pious discussion, you carefully eschew in your discourse by word or pen, any mention of the topics on which they are so fluent. Your very silence on that score is an offence ; and they will not accept of a word you do utter, though it be of a kind to which their own consciences bear witness as an everlasting truth. It has not the right doctrinal stamp upon it, they say ; there is no mention made of this article of Christian faith ; no allusion to another ; and, consequently, something to be suspected and kept at a distance, in all you produce. I had a striking instance of this odious bigotry very lately, in respect to a tract which I offered to a publisher who deals largely in these small theological wares, and who had accepted and published several of the sort, which I had (of course gratuitously) offered to him.

After considerable delay in replying to my communication, he wrote me word that he had showed the tract to a friend, who said it was all very well as far as it went, but that there was a great want in it of specific allusion to the leading doctrines of Christianity ; and upon this want his

friend had descanted in a way which made it desirable that I should read his letter, which he would accordingly transmit to me. To prevent his bringing this bother upon me, I instantly replied that I would not wish him to take the trouble of forwarding the epistle to which he alluded, as I had no doubt that, without reading a word of it, I could render the contents of it *verbatim*. I only requested the return of my own manuscript, which of course I received by the next post ; and there it ended.

## CHAPTER XVI.

FOR some time past, the *Daily Telegraph*, which is the paper I take, has been greatly occupied with the letters of its different correspondents on the vexed question of "Marriage or Celibacy."

Few things seem to me more striking than the extremely low ground on which that momentous subject is contemplated. "Marriage or Celibacy," as there discussed, appears to be regarded as a speculation, to be settled, like all commercial questions, upon its relations with *£ s. d.* Unquestionably, it is but prudent and proper to consider whether there are sufficient funds for the wedding side of the subject ; but surely this, though a very important point, is not the most so, in contemplating it. That has to be sought in the spiritual aspect which it wears, and as of infinitely more

importance than the cash question. The first inquiry which the candidate for matrimony would be wise to make, would be into the nature of the mind and temper of the individual with whom such an intimate, and, except by death or misconduct, such an indissoluble connexion was sought. To have descanted on this side of the question would, perhaps, have brought out opinions full of the good sense which often lies latent in the minds of human beings, and of which they themselves do not know that they are possessed, simply from the want of the suggestive thoughts which collision with other minds produces. For the action of mind upon mind (supposing, of course, that there is any mind to *be* acted upon) is much like that of friction applied to flint—a concussion is given by the word of the strong, bold thinker, which elicits a spark that was dormant in another mind. But no such concussion was effected, or attempted, in the views propounded by the correspondents of the *Daily Telegraph* on this subject. The epistles with which it was filled, ran in the same cuckoo strain of “How much is needed to marry upon; and what shall

we do, and where shall we live when we are married,"—and the like commonplace, mercantile twaddle, and that by the week together ;—so that I took up the paper with something of a cold shiver, and caught the words, "Marriage or Celibacy," with much the same sensation with which I should have looked at a dose of salts and senna. Of course, the writers of these epistles, and probably many other people, would account for this recoil on my part by saying that it was only the splenetic feeling of an aged spinster that caused my dissatisfaction with a theme in which, for many a long year, I could have had no personal interest ; and certainly, as it regards the spleen by which I might be supposed to be actuated in approaching that particular subject, I will not say that I can, conscientiously, entirely repudiate it. With Mrs Malaprop, I believe, "I must own the soft impeachment," in so far at least, as confessing that love and marriage are themes which I do regard with a shade more of bitterness than of benevolence.

After what I have stated in these pages respecting my experience in love-matters, it will be



concluded that it is on the ground of personal disappointment that I thus express myself. Possibly I may, on this account, be disposed to regard with a degree of gloom what has been to me, as I am inclined to believe that, under one modification or another, it is to most women, a source of greater sorrow than any other of their trials. It is only to be expected that the anguish which accompanies a wound upon the affections, and which is experienced in its greatest poignancy when inflicted on a woman, should infuse a portion of wormwood in her reflections on the subjects of love and marriage. Men may, and doubtless often do, experience a stroke upon their feelings from disappointed affections, and one which they suffer from severely. But it is seldom, if ever, that it penetrates so deeply, and lasts so long, as when it pierces the heart of woman. For, besides, that as men, they have generally a variety of engrossing occupations which prevent their indulging that tendency to brood over painful thoughts which is so rife in women ; they are by nature far stronger in the power of self-control, and more supported by disdain of becoming the slaves and victims of

their feelings, than women are. With these last, it is a point and purpose to be interesting and attractive ; as a means to which, of course, they must be careful to cultivate that sweet sensibility which

“ Turns at the touch of joy or woe,  
And turning, trembles too.”

But to a man, with what a droll old woman I used occasionally to talk with, called “a ha’porth of brains,” all this trembling and turning at the touch of joy or woe, is just so much nonsense, which he begs to dispense with as fast as he can. I am inclined to think that a sensible woman also, when time, and better things than time, have subdued the romance of her ideas about love and matrimony, regards as little else than folly,—and, in some instances, a species of folly that bordered upon insanity,—some of the preposterous mistakes she has made in her attachments. It is not without sufficient ground that Cupid is portrayed as blind ; nor yet that he is furnished with a bow and arrow to transfix, with a sudden wound, the human heart. I remember a ridiculous passage in my own life, now only regarded as something to afford matter for mirth, which actually, for a time,

made me very unhappy, from the vagaries of hope and fear which accompanied it. The person who excited this agitation in my youthful heart, which then had not known fifteen years of existence, was a young nobleman passing through his two years of university career, and whom I happened to be placed near at a public concert. He had been a school-fellow of my brother's at Eton, and on the occasion of this concert he exchanged a nod of recognition with him, which same nod was the means of drawing my attention to him, and also, I suppose, of instigating Cupid to draw his bow, and send one of his arrows into my heart.

His lordship was certainly, at that time, handsome enough to realise the notion of a lover, and the propriety of my soon being supplied with one, which my studies in the line of novel reading had brought into some measure of activity; and so, then and there, the first folly of first love began with me. It was of little or no consequence that not the slightest degree of acquaintance took place between us. He presented the hero I wanted, in order to make the drama of my life what it

ought to be, by promoting me to the dignity of being in love, like the rest of the damsels with whose experiences in such matters, various volumes from the circulating library had made me so well acquainted, and that was enough. It will scarcely be believed that anything so vague and flimsy in its nature as an incident of this sort, should have had the power to cause me a moment's pain. But it actually did do this,—from the scope which it gave to the exercise of fantastic visions, and illusive hopes, that in some way, and at some time, just as the heroes and heroines in novels met and married, and were ever happy after,—this young lord and I might meet, and marry, and enjoy perpetual felicity.

To be sure, I was little more than a child when all this nonsense occurred ; but it was a sort of lesson out of the horn-book of a female heart, which made its impression, and that a useful one, for it taught me the fallacious character of all the feelings that agitate the human heart, when they take their source from the tricks and sorceries of the imagination. Well does the wise man say,

“O wicked imagination, whence camest thou in, to cover the earth with deceit?”\*

As a commentary upon this love passage, I may mention that some thirty years after its occurrence, happening, when in London, to accompany a friend to a private exhibition of pictures at the house of a celebrated artist, I perceived amongst them a full-length portrait of this paragon of my girlish fancy. He was then advanced to the dignity of a duke, (I may as well say, in passing, that he has been dead more than twenty years,) and also that of a Knight of the Garter, and, decorated with the insignia of the order, he was looking, I suppose, as well as he knew how, and as the artist was able to make him look. But, as I scanned the pale, pinched features, and the totally insignificant presentment that he made, apart from his robes and the rest of his paraphernalia, I asked myself if it could ever have been possible that such a popinjay as that could have caused me a moment's agitation?

“Yes,” was the reply of “the man within the breast;” “yes—but how ill able were you then to

\* Ecclesiasticus xxxvii. 3.

conceive, what time and experience have made facts as sure to you as that two and two make four, that nothing is too preposterous for the witchcraft of imagination to create, on the subject of that mysterious passion which mortals deify under the name of love. Be assured, that when the spell is broken, and the delusion has passed away, a countless number of women are ready to regard many of their past prepossessions as you now regard yours; and are disposed to think, as you at this moment are, that this sort of infatuation is not greatly different from that by which Titania, in the 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' when under the influence of magic, falls in love, and takes for a divinity, Bottom the weaver, with the ass's head upon his shoulders."

Strange beyond all the strangeness which encompasses the mysteries amidst which "we live, and move, and have our being," is the mistake, and the misery consequent on that mistake, which so frequently accompany the passion between the sexes. Regarded in the fierce hatred, even to loathing, with which, after a courtship that borders upon adoration, it often concludes;—looking at

the way in which this hatred manifests itself sometimes, amongst the brutal beings in the lower orders, by blows, and wounds, and even murder,—and the not less earnest, though more quiet tokens of disgust, by which, in the display of neglect and contempt, it is testified in the higher walks of life ; —one would say that Jacob Behmen's view of this world, as the property of Satan, is likely to be a just one.

At all events, in his spiritual power to magnetise, and bewilder, and bewitch the minds of human beings, added to the malignity which prompts him to draw them into a condition which the most effectually debases their affections, and separates them from the purity of God's Holy Spirit,—the use which the devil makes of this passion is nothing less than marvellous, and such as, more than any other illustration of his influence, justifies the injunction of the apostle to Timothy, to preach and teach so as that those “may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.” \*

It would seem as if this fallen spirit,—this

\* 2 Tim. ii. 26.



“ruler of the darkness of this world,”—having himself lost the divine life of Love, is led, by a thirst of revenge, to employ his power of travesty-ing and transforming what he finds of it in human nature, to suit the vile purposes of his demoniac wickedness. With this view of the case, I can only be thankful that my lot has been that of a Solitaire ; and, in the language of a certain poem, the author of which I do not know, but whose experience I readily make my own, I can sincerely say—

“ God of my life, how good, how wise,  
Thy judgments on my soul have been ;  
They were but blessings in disguise,  
The painful remedies of sin.  
How different now Thy ways appear,  
Most merciful, when most severe.

“ Thou would’st not let the captive go  
Or leave me to my headstrong will,  
Thy love forbade my rest below,  
Thy patient love pursued me still ;  
And forced me from my sin to part,  
And tore the idol from my heart.

“ But can I now the loss lament,  
Or murmur at Thy friendly blow ;  
Thy friendly blow my heart hath rent  
From every seeming good below.  
Thrice happy loss which makes me see  
My all of happiness in Thee ! ”

With respect to the sum and substance of what the last few pages which I have just written, contain, I am quite prepared to find it condemned as significant of arrogance and ignorance, and what not of presumption, in my taking upon myself to speak so deprecatingly of a sentiment to which the common voice of humanity (though perhaps it will be admitted as speaking chiefly in poetry, and the literature most in circulation at Mr Mudie's) has attributed a celestial character. But such censure, a thousand times repeated, would never move me from a conviction that what I have said is founded on immutable truth ; for, whilst giving it utterance, I felt that I had with me the testimony of that internal Guide who conducts the soul "into all Truth," and whom I have taken for my master in all that I have learned of it. When this is the case, there is no questioning,—no taking human opinions as to the right or wrong of what we say, as Fénelon observes—

"Men may speak and discourse to us, in order to instruct us ; but we cannot believe them any farther than as we find a certain conformity or agreement between what they say, and what the

inward master says. After they have exhausted all their arguments, we must still return and hearken to Him for a final decision. It is in the deepest depth of ourselves, by consulting that inward Master, that we must find the truths that are outwardly proposed to us. And thus, properly speaking, there is but one true Master who teaches all, and without whose instruction we learn nothing. It is in the depth of our own souls that He keeps in store for us certain truths which lie, as it were, buried, but which, upon occasion, revive."\* And why should not all the seekers after Truth come under the teaching of this Divine Master? Why should they not be able to say with David, "I have chosen the way of truth; thy judgments have I laid before me," (Ps. cxix. 30.) Is not the reason for their preferring any kind of teacher to this one, *because* of the "judgments" which He lays before them? and which are quick and powerful, and "sharper than any two-edged sword;" and altogether as different from the surface-sliding,

\* Fénelon "On the Existence of God," section 59.

wordy teachings, under which they feel as little in their pew at church, as the dead do in their graves on the outside of it—as light is from darkness.

## CHAPTER XVII.

THE wonderful impulsiveness of the Irish character,—its sudden rushing out into words, and thus letting off, and letting out, the immediate impression with which the mind seethes and effervesces, however wild and irrelevant to present circumstances that impression may be,—is so strikingly exhibited in the following incident, narrated in the “Life of Father Mathew,” that I cannot refrain from giving it a place here. It relates to the experience of one Father Donovan as a jail chaplain, and of how men bore themselves in the supreme moment of their fate:—

“Though a good-natured man, his temper was not difficult to ruffle, and on one occasion it was tried rather curiously. A prisoner was sentenced to death on Friday, and was to be executed on the following Monday. Father Donovan was, as usual, most zealous in his attentions to the con-

demned, and employed the best means to bring him to a suitable frame of mind. On Sunday the priest assured his friends, that 'that poor fellow up in the jail, was a most edifying penitent, whose thoughts were wholly fixed upon heaven.' The hour arrived at which the law was to take its course. The sad procession was slowly winding its way through one of the principal thoroughfares of the city, when the priest, who was absorbed in his pious efforts to complete his good work, was stunned by hearing the condemned man, who sat near him, cry out in a voice expressive of great amazement—'Oh, be the holy powers! that's quare. Yea, Father Donovan, alanna, look there! Look at that fine man up there! But what is he doing there at all at all?'

"The priest indignantly glanced at the cause of this ill-timed excitement, and he saw, over the shop-front of a well-known ironmonger, the—to him—familiar figure of Vulcan, which, cleverly carved in wood, and naturally coloured, stood nude and brawny, leaning in an attitude of repose, the hammer resting on the anvil. The figure was sufficiently life-like to deceive the unhappy culprit,

whose dread of death was not powerful enough to repress every emotion of curiosity or surprise.” \*

I can well believe that even the approach of death, would scarcely suffice to overpower the eagerness of an Irish mind to follow the impulse of the moment.

It was amidst these impulses that I had my bringing up ; and it is to the influence which they exerted over me that I trace a very great part, if not the greatest, of my errors and my sorrows. That of hasty and imprudent speech, more particularly, has occasioned me inexpressible torment ; and well can I understand, and deeply can I sympathise with, the exclamation of one of old—  
“Who will set scourges over my thoughts, and the discipline of wisdom over mine heart ?” †  
“Who shall set a watch before my mouth, and a seal of wisdom upon my lips, that I fall not suddenly by them, and that my tongue destroy me not ?” ‡

It is something of a comfort to me to find that other people share with me in this rashness of

\* “Life of Father Mathew,” by Mr Maguire, p. 21.

† Ecclesiasticus xxxiii. 2.

‡ *Ibid.* xxii. 27.



speech ; for, when lately, after a visit from some individuals with whom I did not feel myself exactly on terms to be free and familiar, in speaking of it to a friend who soon after dropped in for an hour's chat, and saying that I had been upon the rack ever since my visitors departed, under a sense of having said things to them that I wished unsaid,—and that I scarcely ever did come into the society of people with whom I had to *behave myself*, without blundering upon something or another that it drove me half crazy to think of—my friend replied, that it was exactly her own case ; for that she more often than not, in looking back upon what she had said when in company, found cause to wish that she could *unsay* the greater part of it.

These peccadilloes of speech are, however, but small matters to be troubled about, and probably such as are seldom observed, and certainly not cared for by any except the over-sensitive mind, which broods upon a troublesome thought till, gathering fresh force by every moment in which it is acting, it grows into a monster that beats and buffets us till we are ready to scream. I have learned to manage myself better than I was able to

do in former times, under these strange assaults of fancy ; and can, without much trouble, regain "the even tenor of my way," if circumstances have, for a time, sent me out of it.

It is when the "scourge of the tongue" whips us with a consciousness of our folly, in suffering it to lead us into hasty, and, to the last degree, imprudent disclosures, that we have cause to know what a fearful engine of mischief and misery it may become ; and that we can testify upon our own wretched experience that it is, as the apostle James describes it, "a fire, a world of iniquity ;"—that it "setteth on fire the course of nature ; and it is set on fire of hell." \*

There is a particular passage in my life so strikingly illustrative of this propensity of the tongue to "set on fire the course of nature," (of my individual nature, at least,) that, although it will be a fresh violation of my original intention of avoiding autobiographical details, I think I cannot do better than relate it ; inasmuch as, besides the latent lesson which to sensitive and unguarded female minds it may be fitted to impart, some-

\* Chap. iii. 6.

thing in the shape of narration will serve to vary the monotony of didactic remark, with which these pages are filled.

As the ramifications of the subject on which I am about to enter, are greatly mingled with its main purport, they require, like the dropped stitches in a piece of knitting, to be picked up, that the work may be proceeded with in an orderly way. I must, therefore, gather together the antecedents of my tale into the introductory form, which will help to give it the intelligible character that is desirable.

It would seem strange, for instance, that, from my earliest youth, I should have been thrown upon my own hands,—companionless, and unprotected, and untaught,—except in so far as the paternal roof afforded me shelter, and those who dwelt under it the necessities of life ; and the common observances of domestic civilisation demanded my compliance with the routine there established ; and which chiefly, in so far as I was concerned, only required my appearing in my proper place at proper times ;—yet, with these exceptions, I was left pretty much to myself, to

make what I could of my case. It was not a favourable one for any child, and especially a child with such an exuberance of the old Adam in her nature as I had. My mother, who was past three and forty when I was born, and naturally disposed to love a quiet life if it were possible to be obtained, finding herself quite unable to manage me to advantage, was only too glad when my father sent me off to boarding-school, when I had got into my ninth year. Here, for the space of four years, I was brought into proper subjection, and was doing so well, that my father, who was always impatient for results, and could never wait till the fruit was ripe that he wanted to gather, concluded that I had got all the educational good that was needful, and that I might then come home to be useful and agreeable to my mother, who had sunk into poor health, and becoming more and more averse to company, wished for somebody to amuse her at home.

This was natural enough on her part; but it was scarcely to be expected that a lively girl of thirteen would submit, with as much docility as

was desirable, to the province of amusing her in the regular and unvarying way she hoped and anticipated. I could be amusing enough, and well-behaved, and submissive enough, when things went according to my mind. But, for the occasional outbreaks of temper and will, and what the servants used to call "master's making a noise," and "missus's" habit of sitting still by the fireside, I had nothing ready, and could by no possibility make these the things that were according to my mind. My domestic life was thus chequered with variations, in which the black squares greatly predominated over the white. I believe I could have made it out tolerably well, had I had only my mother to deal with ; for I was very fond of her ; and, though headstrong in my will and way, yet accessible to a sense of duty, which made me, upon the whole, I hope and believe, a comfort to her.

It was with the Irish violence of my poor father, that the chief of both my mother's and my own domestic discomfort originated. It is proper, however, that I should state, that neither, as it respected her nor myself, was our happiness im-

paired by any immorality of conduct on his part. He was to her a faithful, and in his strange inconsistent way, also an affectionate husband; as to my brother and myself, his only two surviving children, he might, in many important respects, be termed a kind and liberal father. His great hindrance to the orderly, consistent course of conduct, which would have made himself and his family as happy as most civilised families are, was the circumstance of his marrying, in my mother, a woman whose pecuniary means liberated him from the necessity of working at his medical profession for a livelihood,

To be placed in a condition to do as they like, is a trying matter to everybody; and more particularly to an Irish body, whose national nature instinctively clutches at play, as vastly preferable to work.

To facilitate his opportunities for taking pleasure, my father entered into partnership with a person who was not unwilling to engage in the laborious part of the concern. In thus enlarging his means of enjoyment, he did not diverge into practices which were calculated to bring a shade

of disgrace upon him. He had far too much pride, and, I may also say, too much principle, to enter into any low and debasing pursuits. A man with a nicer sense of what was right and respectable in behaviour, it would have been hard to find. Well do I remember once, when, as a child of some five or six years old, the servants, with whom I passed the chief of my time, not being just then able or inclined to amuse me, and the gate being open which gave an entrance out of the court-yard in which our house stood—I wandered into the street, and took a share in the pastime of hop-sotch which was going on there with the children of the neighbourhood,—well, I say, do I remember his coming upon me in his way home, and snatching me away from my associates, and his driving me before him into the parlour, where my mother was quietly seated with her novel. Even yet, I can remember the burst of indignation with which he replied to her question of, “What was the matter—and what was I crying about?” by saying that, “She might be ashamed of herself to allow me to be playing as he had just caught me, with all the blackguards



in the street." Oh no; it was not by demeaning himself by low pleasures that my poor father lost his way; but rather by going in for what he reckoned as the recreations of a gentleman, in the amusements of card-playing of which he was intensely fond, and dinner-giving to members of the university, who, from their age and station in college, might have known better than to be always ready to partake of his venison and turtle, and drink his good wine, and win his money, and mislead him with a notion that they were his very good friends, when they were about his worst of foes.

Having alluded to my brother, it will naturally be asked, if amongst the domestic surroundings which had a disquieting influence, I did not possess in him somewhat of a compensating character? Well, in a certain kind and degree, and for the very earliest part of my home life after I left school, he might be said to be a resource to me. But he was much too affluent in the exuberance of the Irish character, to be the safe and sober companion which my nature required; and which the circumstance of his being eight

years my senior, would have doubly enhanced in value. My father's great ambition had been to make his son a gentleman ; and having succeeded in getting him placed on the foundation at Eton, he had the supreme satisfaction of seeing him in due time a fellow of King's. Very soon, as commonly happens in the case of excessive eagerness to encompass uncertain advantages, he discovered that if instead of making Sterling (as his name was) a gentleman, he had brought him up under a necessity of labouring at some employment, he would have rescued his son from the rock on which he himself had made shipwreck of all his opportunities ; even that of being able to follow the impulses of his self-will. Before my brother left Eton for college, these impulses had strengthened into habits of indulgence to the lowest propensities of his nature, and which, but that they were balanced by a capacity for, and a considerable measure of cultivation in, refined pursuits of a mental kind, would, at that early stage of his career, have plunged him into the ruin which eventually befell him. But these for a time upheld him, and occasionally rendered his

close connexion educationally useful to me. It was not always for instance, though far too often, that, in my father's kitchen, he would keep the two maid-servants and myself in a roar of laughter, by the relation of some anecdotes, often of a questionable character for propriety, though of none for amusement; for he would vary these modes of dealing with me, by taking me out for a quiet walk, and repeating to me as we went along, some choice and beautiful piece of poetry; his taste and judgment in which was remarkably good. Then again, he would now and then come in the evening, when my father was generally absent, and whose absence was always, unhappily, indispensable to the perfect freedom and comfort of his children, and read to my mother and me, whilst we sat at our work, some interesting book. I recollect with melancholy interest, his thus making me for the first time acquainted with many of Shakespeare's plays, and can, with "my mind's eye," see again the pleased expression of my dear mother's face, in contemplating her two wild and wayward children, thus sobered down to the calm and pleasant way of amusing them

selves, which she herself enjoyed, and could join in, instead of the noisy mirth in which, like children, they sometimes played till they quarrelled. For, after the quick transit from one extreme to another, which seems to be a law in the Irish nature, the sympathy in fun and nonsense which I had with Sterling's talk, would subside into distaste, not to say disgust, when it diverged into a strain of impropriety; and then his anger at my reproof sharply enough administered, and too true to be forgiven, would come out in words, made more bitter by the secret consciousness that he deserved the displeasure I displayed; and a fierce wrangle was the result. It was therefore a refreshment to us all, when we *could* fall upon an expedient for exercising and evolving those higher and better traits which were latent in our minds. Pleasantly would the hours thus pass away, till supper-time brought the foot-boy with tray and table-cloth, and we were reminded that our Parnassian diet had to be exchanged for something more material. None of us were in the least degree indifferent to the pleasures of the table; so, when Sterling

found on inquiry, that only cold meat was forthcoming, and had satisfied himself that my father was at his club, and not likely to be forthcoming at all, he would exclaim, "Then, by George! we'll have something nice and hot from the college kitchens. What do you say, ma'am," turning to my mother, "to a dish of Scotch collops?"

She replies that "nothing can be nicer," to which I entirely agree.

"Now then, you sir," he would go on, addressing the boy, who during this debate had been standing to await the result—"go to the college kitchen, and ask to speak to Mr Lawrence the cook, and tell him that I desire he will send it here—now mind you say *here*, at my father's house—not at my college rooms—do you understand?"

"Oh yes, sir, I understand; but what, please, is he to send?"

"A dish of Scotch collops, you extraordinary calf. Didn't you hear me say, *Scotch collops*? Let me here *you* say it."

The boy then repeats as well as his grinning

from ear to ear will let him, the words, "Scotch collops," and is off.

In as short a time as possible, the savoury viands appear, and we sit down to partake of them with great zest; not at all interrupted by the thought of the great probability that it will fall to my father's lot to pay for them, with the rest of the cook's bill, already, most likely, half as long as the table.

Such as these, poor though they be in value, are about the pleasantest of my reminiscences of my brother. Of those of a painful kind, I need not speak; and may close all that I have to say respecting him, by stating, that soon after this period, he left college, and took up his residence at some distance from Cambridge, where it was his fault, and, poor soul, his misfortune, to pass his time in habits of life which prepared the way to a wreck of constitution that closed his life at the age of five and forty.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

IT was during the fairy dream of my girlish fancy for the young nobleman of whom I have made mention, that these readings from Shakespeare occurred ; and thus, a certain kind of benefit resulted from that vision, in its preparing my mind to understand and sympathise with, the woes of Juliet and other of the great master's delineations of a love-sick heart.

That vision had wholly passed away with a few more of my years ; and I had arrived at an age when less of ignorance and romance were likely to mingle with any attachment I might form.

That I *should* form one of some kind or another, was inevitable ; not only because the youth of women of a much less impressionable temperament than mine, is, I believe, scarcely ever free from some prepossession ; but also because in the place where I resided, the opportunity and temptation



for the indulgence of such influences is greatly augmented by the affluence of admirers which the university brings in the way of girls.

It was to be expected, therefore, that something in the semblance of an attachment would engross my mind.

But before I enter into a relation of it, I must go a little farther into the details which led to it.

These relate chiefly to a connexion which I had formed with a young lady in the way of intimacy. I do not call it friendship; for, independently of that particular sentiment not being one in which my sex can properly be said to shine, I never had any other feeling for Fanny Bird, (as I shall call her,\*) but a sense of satisfaction in the resource she was to me as a walking companion, in the first part of my acquaintance with her; and in her helping me to another associate whose society tended to make the walks I took in her company the principal happiness of my life.

\*For obvious reasons, I prefer to give fictitious names to the persons to whom I am about to allude; though they have been many years deceased.

As my confidantes and especial friends, I possessed in the society of two sisters, Martha and Sarah Walton, those whom circumstances rendered of most particular value to me. Mr Walton their father, was a tradesman in the town ; and as such would have obtained no footing for himself or his family in the higher circles of the place, but for a talent in music which had been well cultivated ; and which in him, and in his two daughters and his youngest son, rendered their society sought at the private concerts, which, in my young days, were much in fashion with some leading members of the university. Mr Walton, who followed the business of a corn-merchant, was a tenant of my father's for some premises near our house, in which his mercantile affairs were carried on ; and as they were members of the same club, an acquaintance was formed between them, which, on the score of music, was soon extended to a great intimacy between me and his two daughters.

It was not, however, so much on the ground of their musical acquirements that the society of these young women was so great a resource to me, as on that of the clever smartness of their minds,

and the turn for fun and satire, which made them good company to those who, like myself, had great enjoyment in a hearty laugh. Whatever was the trouble at home, I had only to steal off to the house of the Waltons, which was very near my own, to merge and forget it there. Always I was sure of a welcome, and sure also of some of "the savoury meat which my soul loved," in little pleasant bits of flattery with which they were skilful in addressing me ; for my friendship was of importance in aiding them in the formation of some university acquaintance, as that, for instance, of Professor Smyth, and another gentleman of the professor's college, both of whom were in the habit of giving frequent and very pleasant musical parties.

But without the stimulus of self-interest to warm their hearts towards me, I had reason to believe that both these girls were sincerely attached to me ; and I had neither wished nor wanted any other companions, but that in the matter of walking out, they could be of little or no use to me, their dinner hour being soon after one o'clock—a time of day in which young ladies generally used

to set out on their daily stroll in my day, and perhaps may do at the present. Now, this customary stroll at such a place as Cambridge, forms no small portion of a young lady's stock of pleasures; since it requires but a moderate share of personal attraction to become "the cynosure" of the multitude of eyes which are gazing on the part of the under-graduates at the female part of the population.

It would not become me to sound my own praises on the score of my personal pretensions to good looks. My mother's remark, on Sterling's saying one day, as he was going out with me for a walk, "I declare that girl is not bad-looking," (I am sure, if I had been, I should never have been seen in public by *his* side), and my mother's reply, as I was about to state, will give my portrait: "If she is but as good as she is good-looking," she said, "she will do very well."

Such as I was in this respect, I knew very well that I had my admirers; and consequently it was a great point to keep up this passing pleasantry of being looked at, and looked for, in the daily walk that was to supply it.

Whilst my brother was in college, it was not difficult to obtain, but when he was gone I had to take up with what I could get as a comrade for my daily exercise—my mother walking nowhere but to church ; and my father never by any chance selecting me as his walking companion.

In this extremity, it was a perfect Godsend when I fell in with Miss Bird, whose circumstances were like my own, with respect to her being the only resident daughter with aged and infirm parents, who lived in great seclusion from the amusements and society of the place.

I had known her for some time before I formed any particular intimacy with her, from being in the habit of meeting her at the house of a Miss Howard, of whom I must say a few words, as she is mixed up in a small measure in what I have to relate. She was an elderly spinster of near forty years of age, living with an old father, who was blind, and kept himself for the most part in his own apartments ; leaving his daughter to be the manager and mistress of his house, in the way that best pleased her. As this was to bring about her pleasant members of the university, young or

elderly, or both, whose presence at her tea-table was sanctioned by the society of a married brother and his wife who lived in the house, her parties were always very agreeable, and I was pleased when she invited me to partake of them, which she now and then did. Her notice of me was not from any particular regard she had for me ; for I believe she felt the distaste which a person in her case would be likely to entertain for a girl who usurped a place which she herself once occupied as "an object of some notice and admiration ; but from which, advancing years and fading attractions had displaced her. She had certainly, in her youth, been very pretty, and on that account, admired. But she was vain and silly to the last degree of folly, in trying at the hopeless task of repairing her dilapidated charms by rouge and washes, and such "appliances and means to boot," by which, after the fashion of Madame Rachel, she might keep herself "beautiful for ever." Hopeless as such attempts must be, even when directed by consummate skill, as we may take it for granted are those of Madame Rachel, they were not only fruitless in accomplishing their purpose, but they fulfilled a

consequence which was the very last that Miss Howard intended, or had the slightest conception of, in rendering her ridiculous to behold, by the preposterous fashion in which she applied them.

I cannot say that I have the slightest idea of the best way of putting on rouge ; but I am quite sure that it ought not to be daubed upon each cheek in a sharply-defined circle about the size of a five-shilling piece, which was Miss Howard's mode of using it. She had, however, got accustomed to the sight of her own face thus illuminated, and I suppose, by intimacy with its appearance, was not aware of its absurdity.

She played on the piano pretty well ; and sought the society of persons who were fond of music ; and still more those who could keep up the ball of conversation ; not for any fitness that she herself had for it, for she was amazingly silly ; but rather, I believe, from a secret conviction, that if she desired to maintain her acquaintance with members of the university, she must bring about her some persons of her own sex more capable of interesting them than herself or Fanny Bird. This



last individual was her very intimate friend ; I always supposed, from a congeniality of feebleness of mind, for Fanny was very weak. But she was superior to Miss Howard in knowing how to avoid making herself conspicuous in her mode of dress. She had a defect in her speech, which, added to a plain personal appearance, made it safest for her to keep, as she always did, retired and silent in company ; and the chance was, that for the most part, anybody that had to give an account of the guests assembled at a party at which she was present, would be apt totally to overlook her. But she was lady-like in her manners, and from her position in life, admissible into the best company of the place ; and somehow or another, generally found in it ;—probably from the harmlessness of her presence, which prevented her standing in the way of other girls who wanted to be prominent, or whose parents wished to make them so. There was also an idea prevalent that it was an act of charity to ask “poor Fanny Bird to a party ;” and thus it happened that there were but few parties to which she did not make her way. After I got intimate with her, I scarcely recollect an occasion

on which Professor Smyth gave a concert in which he did not include Fanny in the invitation he gave to me, which was assuredly an act of pure benevolence on his part, as she was neither useful nor ornamental in his concert-room.

I used to hope and persuade myself, that this was his motive for such an attention ; for, to speak truly, I should have felt humbled that it was suggested by a desire to show attention to Fanny Bird on the ground of her being my particular friend. The disparity which, without being guilty of undue self-conceit, I could not but be conscious existed between us on the score of mental ability, often making me somewhat ashamed of the close connexion I had formed with her ; and which nothing but my lack of suitable associates for the daily walk which was one of the few resources of my life, could possibly have induced me to engage in.

I have travelled by a very circuitous path to the point I had in view respecting the attachment to which I alluded, and concerning which I will now more directly speak,—by stating, that it was in my visits to Miss Howard that I was in the

habit of constantly meeting at her tea-table a young under-graduate of the name of Halford. Whoever was absent, he was never to be missed ; but what particular inducement brought him there it always puzzled me to imagine. It was not to take any share in the conversation that passed ; for he was reserved and silent, and except as he listened to the music which might happen to be going on, he was apparently indifferent to the whole of the matter. Now and then, indeed, he indicated by a quiet smile that he was observing with some kind of interest what was passing ; but whether his smile were not rather of an ironical than of a kindly character, seemed to be doubtful. As this testimony was usually given when I was what Professor Smyth used to term "in full force," that is to say, coming out strong in talk and laughter, or perhaps, in the milder mode of music, which commonly was asked for, at my hands at these visits ;—I got an idea that Mr Halford was no particular friend of mine. In fact, I settled it in my own mind, that he had set me down in his as a vain coquette, with whom display was the only object for which she lived and acted. It thus

happened, that I exceedingly disliked him, and avoided to recognise him when we met in the street.

Some three or four years might pass in this way ; during which time, though I met Miss Bird frequently at Miss Howard's, I had formed no immediately personal acquaintance with her. Some circumstance, the nature of which I forget, led to her calling upon me, and thus began our alliance as walking companions.

I had observed in my visits at Miss Howard's, that there was a great intimacy between Mr Halford and Miss Bird ; to whom the chief part of the little he did say was generally addressed, and whom he never failed to escort home, as a thing of course.

Had it not seemed preposterous to suppose that anybody could be in love with poor Fanny, I should have imagined that something in the shape of attachment subsisted between them. But this appearing impossible, I concluded that his civilities to her originated from his being a family friend, and as such, desirous of showing a compassionate sympathy to so helpless a member of the house-

hold as Fanny was. At the time when my personal intercourse with her commenced, my acquaintance with Miss Howard had declined ; owing to an alteration in her mode of life on the event of the death of her father, which, by causing her to reside in apartments, circumscribed her former habit of assembling visitors to her tea-table. I do not remember ever being her guest after this change occurred in her circumstances ; though in a small way, I believe she still had her parties. But I was not invited to them ; not being perhaps wanted, as in former times, to help matters off when her guests were more numerous.

The interval which had separated me from her society, had also separated me from that of Mr Halford ; and I had almost forgotten that such a person existed, when he was brought to my remembrance by once more meeting him as an intimate acquaintance at the house of Fanny's parents ; where I became myself also a frequent guest. It was not that Mr and Mrs Bird presented more lively specimens of human nature than I found at home in my own parents, that I soon got to find my visits at their house something to anticipate

with pleasure ; but because at their tea-table it was seldom that Mr Halford was not a dropper-in ; and the Mr Halford that now offered himself to my observation was a very different person from the one I had formerly known. He was different first of all, in position ; the interval of three or four years having, by the circumstance of his taking a very high degree, placed him in the station of fellow and tutor of his college. Above all, he was different in distinguishing me by marked attentions ; and he was different from the silent person that was seldom heard to speak at all at Miss Howard's tea-table, to one, who, at that of Mrs Bird, was a fluent and very agreeable converser.

That these alterations on his side should produce a corresponding change on mine, with respect to the interest I took in his society, was only to be expected. That he was no common person, I always suspected, in the days when I met him at Miss Howard's ; for though silent, and his occasional smile indicating one scarcely knew what of feeling,—there was an air of superiority about him, and a look of intelligence, which clearly manifested



that he was, as, I have said, no common person. You might have said that he seemed to be proud and reserved, and in that way, not agreeable ; but you would never have overlooked him in company from his being insignificant. Once, I remember, even in those days, a little passage—a very little one—in the shape of talk passing between him and me—from which I imbibed a notion that he was, though very disagreeable, yet an accomplished man on the subject of refined literature. It occurred thus. It was summer-time, and the window being open, two or three of us were standing by it in Miss Howard's drawing-room ; and the moon attracting attention from its shining with great brilliancy, Mr Halford uttered in a low voice—

“ And oft as if her head she bow'd,  
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.”

I well recollected the lines, from having read, or learned them in some school lesson ; but knew nothing of, or had forgotten, their author, as my remark of, “ That is Walter Scott's, I think,” sufficiently testified.

With what seemed to me more than ever a hate-



ful smile, he bowed to me and said the one word, "Milton's."

For the moment—how I hated him ; the quiet tone of the reply, coupled with the smile, conveying a notion of his saying to himself, "What an ignoramus that girl is !"

But to return to my present impression of the idea he was forming of me. It was by no means that of my being an ignoramus. On the contrary, it was the charm of my life to believe, that, in the frequent intercourse that passed between us, especially in the many summer evening walks which he took with Fanny and me, he found me as responsive as he could wish, to the thoughtful and refined tone of conversation in which it was his habit on those occasions to indulge.

I will not permit myself to be led aside by the garrulity of my age and nature, insensibly to glide into a detailed statement of this unhappy passage in my experience. I am somewhat ashamed, after what I set out with saying on the subject of autobiography, to find how greatly I have trespassed against all the excellent things respecting its danger, and my purpose of avoiding it, to which I then gave

utterance. Suffice it to say, that, after the lapse of some months of intimate association with Mr Halford, I became greatly attached to him ; not after the fashion of the girlish folly which accompanied my first fancy of the sort ; but with an affection that was founded upon a sense of his merits, or what I took for such ;—and upon a belief which his attentions to me unquestionably authorised me to entertain, of his being also greatly attached to me.

## CHAPTER XIX.

I HAVE<sup>d</sup> said enough in this Record touching the terrible reaction which often converts the sweet sentiment of love into a stormy passion of an entirely opposite nature. It is not without reason that Rochefoucault has remarked, that "to judge of love by some of its effects, it is more like hatred than love."

It was so with me, when time and circumstances made it only too certain, that in the attentions he had paid me, Mr Halford had only been influenced by that passing interest which many persons of his sex think it perfectly allowable to feel and to manifest, as long as no explicit avowal of attachment is made on their part. I may condense what I have to state on this head by saying, that at the end of about a year after our intimacy took place, the last three months of which being the period of

the long vacation, he had spent away from college, an entire cessation of intercourse had taken place between us. In this interval I had talked the matter over with the Waltons ; who were far more congenial confidantes and sympathisers than Fanny. It was totally impossible that she should not have remarked Mr Halford's apparent interest in me ; but whenever I sounded her on the subject, with a hope of discovering some clue to the real state of his feelings for me, I found her totally impenetrable as to yielding anything like a comfortable response to my approaches. So far from it, she usually spoke of his manner to me as having nothing unusual in it. He was apt to show great interest in the society of clever women, she said ; and then, alluding to a lady whose poetical effusions he greatly admired, and some of which he had repeated, and copied out for me,—she added that she had seen him pay quite as much attention to her as to me. On repeating this to the Waltons, they flatly said they did not believe it ; for that the lady in question, whom we all knew by sight, and by her position, which was that of a farmer's daughter in a neighbouring village,—though un-

questionably a person of genius, was much too homely in her appearance and her connexions for so proud a man as Mr Halford to distinguish by any marked attention. What they did believe was, that Miss Bird was in love with him herself ; and that the cause of her evading to express the conviction she could not but feel, of Mr Halford's attachment to me, was, the jealousy with which it had inspired her.

I cannot say but that an idea of this kind had crossed my own mind ; and hence I was not so much disturbed by her way of treating the matter as I otherwise should have been.

At all events, I yielded a ready assent to the advice they both gave me, not only not to speak of him myself to Fanny, but to bind her down by a solemn promise not to speak of me to him, when he again fell in her way. "There was no saying," Martha observed, "what mischief a weak creature like that might do, by talking to him about me. (I may observe in passing, that her standing aloof from their acquaintance, rendered Fanny particularly obnoxious to the Waltons ; as did Halford's reticence towards them, when they

occasionally met him in any company, disincline them to regard him with favour.) "By all means, therefore," she said, "keep as far away from the subject as you possibly can in all you have to say to her; and keep as far away also, from him, when he returns to college. I would not go to Miss Bird's house, if I were you, lest I should be thought to put myself in his way—she can come to you, if she wants to see you."

As Martha Walton was a very sensible girl, with a far more practical sense of female dignity than fell to my share, I was willing to be guided by her counsel, and promised that I would faithfully follow it.

This promise I adhered to, till the return of Halford to college, with which I accidentally became acquainted, excited so strong a desire to hear something about him, that I could not refrain from inquiring of Fanny every time we met, if she had seen anything of him?

The resolution not to go to her house I rigidly kept; and it was only by visits to me that I saw her. Our usual walks went on, which from the time of year were confined to the morning; when,

in the time of our greatest intimacy with him, we scarcely ever were joined by Halford ; whose college and other engagements generally occupied him that part of the day.

I found from Fanny, that more than a fortnight had passed after he returned before he dropped in one evening to take tea at her house ; and that, on that occasion of her seeing him, he had made no inquiry after me.

“ And you said nothing about me ? ”

“ Of course not,” she replied ; “ you remember that you desired me expressly not to mention your name.” I could not help wishing with all my heart that I had not done so ; for I thought it only too likely that it was *her* not making any allusion to me, that had occasioned him to make none himself ; for, of course, he would think she had some cause for her silence, and one which augured no good to him, with regard to my solicitude to hear of his welfare.

It was clear that he had made use of the opportunity which the long vacation afforded, of disengaging his mind from any importunate feelings which might have entered it on my account. But



how differently had I passed that interval! It was not in attempting to drive him from my mind, but in feeding the impression he had left upon it by fond reminiscences of the past delightful summer,—with its sweet evening walks, and the exquisite gratification which accompanied them in the secret tokens of tenderness they brought me from him.

Fanny, indeed, was present; but Fanny was near-sighted, as well as dense of observation. She could not therefore perceive (or, if she did, she made no comment to me on it) when the arm of Halford encircled my waist as we sat down by the hour together in his college garden, whither, during the latter period of our evening walks, we had, at his suggestion, repaired, in preference to going for a country ramble, as had been, in the first instance, our custom.

Could I forget these tender testimonies of his love? Was it an easy matter—was it a matter that I could for a moment endure to think of—to cast them from my memory as things of nought, and to tear up by the root that enchanting passion which, for so many months, had made the

charm of my most uncharming life? Was it, in short, a dream that meant nothing? This was the incessant inquiry which tormented me during a separation which deluding hope led me daily to expect would be ameliorated, if not ended, by his addressing to me a letter avowing his attachment. This being withheld, after his silently stealing away, in a manner that looked ominous to me, and which to the Waltons appeared only too significant of his intending to retreat out of the affair,—I could only cling to a hope that his return to college would bring with it a renewal of his attentions, and that avowal of their purport which I could not allow myself to believe would never be made.

It may be supposed, therefore, that the account I heard from Fanny, and which continued during some weeks to be the same, of his never mentioning my name, must have occasioned me extreme distress. Undoubtedly it did; but it was not simply the distress of disappointed hope that agitated me. The elements of anger and vindictiveness were far too potent in my temperament not to rise up with extreme vehemence at finding

myself thus ignominiously treated. Oh, how I longed to meet him, that I might pass him by with a scathing glance of silent contempt! But of meeting him I had no chance; for Fanny said that he had told her he kept almost entirely secluded in his college rooms—seldom leaving them, but for an occasional call at her house. That this mode of keeping out of the way arose from a wish to avoid the chance of meeting me, I could not doubt.

Altogether I was wretched beyond the power of words to describe. Poor Fanny, who, I believe, in her small way sincerely loved me, used to try and soothe me by ringing the changes upon his having *flirted*, as she called it, with others as well as me. It was his way, she said, and she fully believed he could not help it. To my unutterable surprise, on my replying to this with the ironical inquiry of, “Did he ever flirt with you?” she hung down her head, and in a low tone of voice replied, “That he certainly at one time had paid her a great deal of attention.”

It almost took away my breath to hear her make such a statement. Attention to Fanny

Bird ! Who next ? I thought. Possibly, Miss Howard might have come in for a share of his heart ; and, though wondering at my own absurdity in putting such a question, I asked if this had ever been the case ?

“ Well, she would not say that it had not. At any rate, Miss Howard at one time believed that he was attached to her.”

The first sensation that I experienced on hearing this intelligence was that of a disdain that seemed to liberate me at once from every grain of attachment to Halford. The man who would make Fanny Bird and Miss Howard the objects of any attention but that of civility,—or of any sort or semblance of behaviour that could be mistaken for love,—must be, I thought, such a double-dyed rascal, that it was little less than infamous to be attached to him. For, what possible motive could he have in noticing these women with any appearance of especial interest, except to amuse himself at their expense ?

The Waltons, however, were not inclined to believe that this had been the case. It was not that they were disposed to favour him ; for they

fully believed that he had deserted, and used me extremely ill. But they thought that the charge of paying too much attention to Fanny Bird and Miss Howard had its ground only in their own folly. It was likely enough, they thought, that so weak a person as Fanny might easily mistake compassion for love ; and with respect to Miss Howard, who laid herself out by efforts that everybody detected and laughed at, to win the notice of every man that came in her way, it would take very little in the shape of civility on Mr Halford's part to make her think that he was in love with her.

As usual, my talking with them, in some measure composed my mind, and relieved it a little from the extremely agitating emotions which Fanny Bird's discourse had occasioned.

## CHAPTER XX.

I HAD no alternative but to be quiet and bear as best I could, the wretchedness which had succeeded to my former enjoyment. I wished—and I did more than wish—I prayed earnestly for strength, and for the consolation which I felt well assured, could only come from divine succour. As testimony that I did not make use merely of the *verbiage*, which it is often the habit of afflicted young people to indulge in, before experience has made them *really* convinced that “God alone is their refuge and strength ; a very present help in time of trouble,” I will here subjoin some lines, in which at this time, with heartfelt fervour, I poured forth the agonising anguish that oppressed me :—

“O Power Supreme, my Maker and my God !  
To Thee with supplicating heart I bend ;

If I am call'd to feel thy chastening rod,  
Do Thou one ray of heavenly hope extend,  
And leave me not, my Father and my Friend.  
Without Thy aid, my spirit sinks oppress'd,  
For sin and sorrow bow me to the ground.  
With Thee, O Lord, my troubled soul would rest,  
With Thee, in whom alone repose is found.  
Oh teach me, then, the calm and better way,  
That leads to perfect and enduring bliss,  
That points to realms of everlasting day,  
And turns the sufferer from a world like this,  
Where all is disappointment and distress !”

Young as I was, the world had been to me far more of this sad character than of any other ; and from my earliest years, a strange melancholy sense of sorrow had often prompted religious thoughts and feelings, very unusual in such early life. As it has a direct bearing upon this point, I will transcribe a passage from a work in which I have alluded to what might, possibly, be the secret cause of this precocious tendency to devotional feeling :—

“ I cannot recollect the time in which I was not the better for sorrow ; for I cannot remember the distress of any kind that did not, as by instinct, carry me straight to God, as a child when vexed runs to its mother for help and comfort.

“ And here, as a physical fact that may not be



without its significance to the thoughtful observer of nature, I may mention a circumstance that perhaps carries with it some solution of the rather singular fact of a child of ten years old, under a deep sense of injury and injustice, hastening to her bed-room, shutting the door, and kneeling down to implore, with sobs and tears, that God would comfort her—as I well remember doing on one occasion when I had been unkindly, or rather, I should say, injudiciously treated ; for the lecture that wounded me was certainly needed, but the words and way in which it was delivered, something worse than annihilated all the benefit it was designed to convey.

“The circumstance to which I allude was once, and only once, with affecting earnestness, brought before me by my mother, on some occasion of disturbance between me and my father. She had sometimes thought, she said, that the cause of the wretched estrangement which existed between him and me, had its origin in the misery that his restlessness and irascible temper had more particularly occasioned her, during her pregnancy with me, than at any former time. ‘I never lived so

unhappily with him as during that time,' she said. She did not add, but from her devotional nature I can feel assured that it was the fact, that she never also lived so much in the practice of prayer. Her unborn offspring had need of the act as well as herself; and even if erroneous, it has still been very sweet to me to believe that I benefited both by her sorrow and her supplications; though possibly, in the mysterious operation of physical causes, I might inherit from her troubled mind, many painful feelings in relation to my other parent."\*

I might, perhaps, have struggled through my present trial, by the help of the prayers I put up for strength, and which, most assuredly, "went not forth from feigned lips;" but in the early part of the year, a circumstance occurred which tended greatly to increase my sufferings. This was the arrival from London of a Miss Hart, a cousin of Fanny Bird's, to make her a visit of some weeks. She was an attractive girl both in person and manner; and, as far as I could judge, of a superior and cultivated mind. Her presence seemed to radiate a measure of mental power over Fanny;

\* "Reminiscences of Thought and Feeling," p. 146.

who from the time of her cousin's visit, came out after a fashion of self-assertion quite new, and strangely offensive to me, to whom she had always been as yielding as wax to the seal. The fact, I have no doubt, was, that she had talked over with Miss Hart the affair in which she had lately taken the part, though but a mute, and what must have seemed to a sensible person, rather the ignoble one, of a medium for intercourse which took place between me and Halford ; and had been advised by her cousin to stand aloof from having any more to do with it. It was only on this idea that I could account for the rather stately reserve with which she met my never-failing questions as to what she knew about Halford. For it was in vain that I had resolved not to speak to her of him. I would do nothing else whenever we met ; which, till the arrival of Miss Hart, had been, as usual, almost every day. After she came, Fanny, on the ground of having to go out with her cousin, (who, being on her first visit to Cambridge, had many sights to see,) came to me less frequently.

As far as her society went, the reduction of her visits would have given me no concern ; but as

being the only channel by which I would hear of Halford, their becoming not only less frequent, but also very trying, by the haste in which she generally ended them, by saying, she must go, as her cousin was waiting for her to go here or go there, to see some college hall, or garden, or chapel, or library,—they became to me a perfect infliction. More especially were they this, when, by dint of questioning and cross-questioning, I discovered that, although not their escort in their morning engagements in seeing sights, Mr Halford was very often their visitor in the evening.

“And flirting, I suppose, with Miss Hart,” I said.

“He admires her very much,” she replied.

I need not say how this state of matters added fuel to the wrathful indignation against Halford, which, though by no means subdued, was, by the best efforts I could make, and the force of circumstances that constrained me to be mute and motionless,—kept in abeyance till now. But now,—now the storm became too furious, too overwhelming to stand against. My soul drifted into a whirlpool that drove it hither and thither amidst the perilous rocks of desperate passions, which made me reck-

less of danger, and bent upon nothing but satisfying the thirst for revenge which sprung from the fiery wrath that governed me. I *must* do something—but what? Shall I go bodily to Halford's rooms, and upbraid him to his face with the cruelty and perfidy of his conduct? Oh, not that, for heaven's sake, and any sake, *not that*, my common sense exclaimed, as this suggestion darted across my mind.

“An anonymous letter? That was better; but of what use would it be? How could I word it?—what had I to say under a mask that would not degrade, without being of the least use in gratifying me?”

All at once it occurred to me, that a sharp, stinging address to him in the shape of a valentine, would be a capital arrow to shoot; and one which, from the circumstance of its not being unusual for people to address, and be addressed, anonymously, on that particular day which goes by the name of St Valentine's—would, at the same time that it afforded me the opportunity of chastising him, place me in ambush whilst I made use of it.

It was altogether a charming thought, and one that should forthwith be transmuted into a deed ; for, on referring to the calendar, I found that the fourteenth of February was near at hand, not much more than a week intervening, Refreshed and invigorated by merely having something to do—and something so full of point and purpose as that of inditing, and writing, and transmitting this valentine—I set myself to the fulfilment of my intention with a will.

## CHAPTER XXI.

THE valentine was written, and as far as language could give force to indignation, it was alive with scorn. Having no copy of it, and but a very slight and fragmentary recollection of a line here and there, I cannot pretend to offer anything approaching to a specimen of its contents.

I remember that it gave a list of the ladies to whom Mr Halford was reputed to have paid the attentions of a lover; and I recollect that in introducing Miss Howard amongst them, the first two lines were these:—

“A painted spinster in the list succeeds,  
For whom a while thy stricken bosom bleeds.”

The rest of it I cannot recall.

With respect to Fanny Bird, I think there were only four lines; but describing her with unmis-



takable accuracy. I recollect that the two last of them spoke of her as

“Homely in person, and of empty mind,  
Her only charm, she was of womankind.”

I reserved my own case for the last. I think there were eight lines in it; but I can only remember the first and the last couplet—of these the first ran thus:—

“One unrecorded yet,—the last deceived,  
Who, all too credulous, thy love believed.”

What came next I entirely forget; but I suppose it had reference to his being ashamed of himself, or having cause to be; for it concluded with the words—

“And fit it were to hide that guilty face,  
Which needs must blush with merited disgrace.”

The next thing was to get somebody to transcribe it, as he was familiar with my handwriting. There was no difficulty here, for Sarah Walton willingly undertook this office, and also to send it to a friend in London, with strict directions to post it so as that it should greet him at his breakfast-table on the morning of Valentine's

Day. Both she and her sister were delighted with it, and enjoyed the flagellation it would administer to Halford, almost as much as I did.

At length the day—"the auspicious day, big with the fate,"—of what to me was of much more importance than that of "Cato and of Rome"—arrived ; and I feasted all the morning in picturing to myself the sentiments with which it would inspire the recipient of it. That he would be wounded very deeply by the humiliating picture it drew of his taste in love matters, I felt very certain. Miss Howard, and Fanny Bird ! To both of them he always paid kind attentions ; but that to neither was it possible that he could have extended a thought of anything beyond civility, I had got to believe as firmly as the Waltons. He had received, as it were, the freedom of the house, to come when he liked, and stay as long as he liked, from the friends of both Miss Howard and Miss Bird ; and he considered it but becoming to requite their hospitality by the courtesies of a gentleman. This, I have no doubt, was the right reading of what Fanny and her friend had misinterpreted into a warmer

meaning, and one which I dare say it never entered his head to imagine that anybody could insult him by attaching to it.

Few persons were less likely than he was, to be approached with any sort of undue freedom ;—his extreme reserve, except where he was on very intimate terms, and his lofty pride, throwing a potent shield of defence against the slightest touch of impertinence. How he would wince then, when this shower of darts came pelting upon him ! It was after this manner that I tried to satiate the longing of my soul to repay him some of the pain he had so long and so heavily heaped upon me.

All this, however, was but imaginary gratification ; and I should soon have felt its insufficiency to produce any result that was of much value, had I not hoped that on the following day I should be able, by quiet and skilful management, to extract from Fanny some tidings of the effect it had produced. She and her cousin were on the evening of Valentine's Day to be at a party at Miss Howard's ; and by dint of great trouble in asking heaps of questions to which she would for some time only give the most vague replies, I discovered

that Mr Halford was to be there. That he would try and sound Fanny in order to discover if she knew anything of the valentine, I felt quite certain; for, all that she did know, he was well aware that it would be no difficult task for him to extract. I say for *him* it would be easy enough to get out of Fanny all that he wished to know, if it were known to herself; but where Fanny had no desire to impart intelligence, you might as well have sought it out of a brick wall as out of her. She used to torment me on the subject of Halford, till I felt as if I must give her a good shake or a box on the ear. The plain truth was, that she had dwelt long enough as a cypher between Halford and me;—powerless to interpose in the pleasure we took in each other's society, and therefore making a virtue of necessity, and meekly enduring it. Now the tables were turned, and her day of power was come; and with the natural delight of a narrow mind in being able to tease a larger one, she made me feel that she had, for once, got the upper hand of me.

I had got her to promise that she would call upon me on the day following Miss Howard's

party, though I had some difficulty in obtaining her consent to do so: "She would if she could, but it must be in the afternoon, as they had an engagement for the morning."

In the afternoon, therefore, I retired to my bedroom, where I usually received her visits, my father not liking her, nor my intimacy with such a three-parts idiot as he thought her. That I sat down with intense excitement to wait her arrival I need not say. It did not tend to prepare me for the quiet and cautious way of dealing with her which I was aware would be highly necessary, that she kept me waiting a full hour before she made her appearance, and that when she did come, the first thing she said was, that "she could not stay a minute; for that they were going out to tea, and she must return home to dress."

I felt excessively angry, and could but ill command myself to ask, with needful calmness, after the circumstances of the preceding evening. I made the effort to ask, as if I did not care much about the answer, "if Halford was of the party at Miss Howard's?"

"Yes."

"And how did he behave?"

"Just as usual."

"I suppose he did not speak of me?"

"He never mentioned your name."

"Nor you?"

"Certainly not. You desired that I never would. But now I really must go," and she rose from her seat. Half mad, (I need not say *half*—you will think I was wholly so, presently,) I took her by my two hands and forcibly replaced her on her chair. "Sit down," I said, in a voice that half frightened her, and forced her into obedience, "I have something particular to ask about. Now, *was* Halford just as usual last night?"

"To be sure he was. Why shouldn't he?"

"*Why shouldn't he!*" I will tell you why. The man who yesterday morning had received such an epistle as this (I took a copy of the valentine from my pocket) ought to be in a state of feeling very far from what was usual with him. I will read it to you."

She evinced no sort of hurry to be off now, but set herself, with manifest eagerness of look, to listen to what was coming. I began, and read

with the energy that my highly-excited state produced, unvisited with any sense of the dilemma into which I had plunged, till I came within sight of the lines that had reference to Fanny. Then, indeed, a sense of the amazing folly of my conduct frightfully stared me in the face! I must go on with it, that was clear. To leave off there would be to proclaim that there was something left which she was not to hear. Luckily the lines that related to her were detached, and could easily be passed over, which of course they were, and I went on smoothly enough to the end of it. She was visibly listening with strained attention to every word, and chuckled amazingly at the lines about the "painted spinster." "Ah, that's Miss Howard," she said. When I came to those which touched upon my own case, she said nothing.

"And now," said I, as, having concluded, I doubled up the letter, and returned it to my pocket, "will you tell me that Halford said nothing that had any relation to this letter, which was addressed to him as a valentine, yesterday being Valentine's Day?"

She coloured of the deepest crimson as she re-



plied, "He did tell me that he had been favoured with a valentine."

"Nothing more?"

"He said that he could guess the quarter from whence it came."

"And yet you told me that he never mentioned me?"

"I told you that he never mentioned your name. No more he did."

Finding that there was nothing further to be drawn out of her than just this vague account of what he said about it, I no longer opposed her going. But now aware of the terrible chance to which I had exposed myself, of her betraying me to him, I bound her down by a promise little less sacred than a vow, that she would not disclose to him that I was the author of the valentine; nor yet to her cousin, or her mother, or any one else. She readily gave me her sacred word that she would faithfully keep my secret; and that no one should hear from her what had just passed between us.

Having brought my narration to the point of hasty and indiscreet speech which I proposed to

illustrate, by this particular instance of my own folly in that respect, I might now conclude it with but a few words descriptive of its result.

But I should be unjust to myself, and also to Halford, to leave off with this "lame and impotent conclusion," when the sequel, as it regards us both, conducts to something a little better.

I proceed, therefore, to state, that Fanny had no sooner taken leave than I went to the Waltons to relate to them what had passed ; though, truth to say, I scarcely knew how to report myself as having acted so foolishly. They were, as they well might be, overpowered with amazement ; and could only comment on the case with uplifted hands and interjections.

Sarah was the first to speak her thoughts of the matter ; which she did in the sensible remark of, "I wonder, when these impulses to cut your own throat with your tongue come upon you, that you don't run straight into some room, and save yourself by locking the door, and throwing the key out of the window."

"I wonder I don't," said I, "but that remedy comes too late now."

"I hope you didn't tell Miss Bird that I transcribed it?" she asked, as if fearing that I had gone into all the details of the affair.

Happily I could satisfy her that this had not happened ; and that no one was implicated in my rashness but myself.

And with respect to this, I said, "I hoped there was nothing to fear ; for I had made Miss Bird give me a sacred promise that she would not divulge to Halford, nor yet to any one else, that I was the author of the valentine."

They both of them doubted the security of Fanny's promise.

"Why, surely," said I, "she would not perjure herself? for it was not much otherwise than by an oath that I bound her to secrecy."

"She will not, I dare say, directly tell Mr Halford that you are the author of the valentine," said Martha ; "but just think of the easiness with which he can get out of her, if not all she knows, yet that she knows something on the subject."

"Besides," said Sarah, "it is totally impossible that such a silly creature as she is, can support the importance of being intrusted with such a secret

as that, without blinking and winking, or by some dumb show or another, letting it be known."

"God help me then," said I. "I *have* made a mess of it!"

"Well, well," said Martha; "it cannot be helped now. Try and forget it; and come down and drink tea with us, and we will have some nice music afterwards."

"Thus cheer'd they their poor friend,\*  
And she was cheered."

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\* I take the liberty of substituting these words in the place of "his fair spouse," in Milton.

## CHAPTER XXII.

I HAD not long to wait before Fanny's manner sufficiently testified that she had, by some means or another, imbibed a notion that she had not heard the whole of the valentine. At length she point-blank asked me if I had read it all to her ?

I did not go into the direct falsehood of saying that I had done so. I fenced off her query by asking, "Why she doubted it?"

"Mr Halford," she said, "had hinted that she herself was mentioned in it."

You may depend upon it, that I availed myself of the opportunity this gave me of changing the subject, by accusing her of having violated her promise not to speak to him about it.

"I dare say you have told him that I read it to you," I said.

She had not done so, she replied ; nor had she said a word to him of what had passed.

“It was he himself, of his own accord,” she went on to say, “who spoke of it, and dropped hints about her being alluded to.”

It is a remarkable thing that, whatever the delinquency into which people fall, it is sure to bring with it the sin of lying. Through God’s mercy, this is a sin to which I have not much natural tendency ; but there have been occasions, and this was one, in which there seemed no way out of a difficulty but by going very close if not directly into it. I did not, however, say in so many words that she had heard the whole of the lines. I palliated, and trimmed with the query of, “Why should you think I would deceive you ?” and the like equivocations ; which, at the same time that they gave evidently no satisfaction to her, made me inwardly shrink with the consciousness of the low and contemptible part I was acting, both by her and by myself.

The greater part of a fortnight had elapsed since the sending of this hateful valentine, (for I had got most thoroughly to detest it, and fervently

to wish it had never been sent,) when Fanny one morning presented herself at my house to ask, she said, "a great favour of me."

"What is it?"

"Only that you will comply with a request I have to make; which is, that you will allow Mr Halford to show me the valentine; for he says that, provided you agree to it, he has no objection to doing so. But he will not do it without your permission."

The malice of the man, and the perfidy of Fanny, which occasioned it,—for well assured was I that it was, as Sarah Walton said, by blinking, or winking, or some dumb show or another, that she had informed him that I was the author of the valentine,—so wholly overcame me, that I replied to her by saying, "I don't care what he does with it. He may read it to you, or at the Market-cross, if he likes."

She took not the slightest notice of the anger with which I spoke; but, of course, accepting it as a compliance with her request, she went away.

I went off immediately to the Walton girls, to tell them the crisis to which the affair



was brought; and to hear what they thought about it.

They scarcely thought that he would show the lines to Fanny. He would not mind what pain he might bring upon me by doing so; but he would hardly like to wound her feelings by showing her a portrait of herself drawn in such humiliating colours.

“Oh no, no,” Martha said. “It is only to make you tremble by showing you that you are in his power, that he has set this goosey girl to ask your leave for his showing it. He cannot do so base a thing.”

I was not quite so sure of this. There was an immense heap of self-esteem, and such a mountain of pride in the man, that I could imagine him capable of going to any length in resenting such an attack upon his dignity as I had made. There was nothing for it but to hope he would refrain, when it came to the point, from revenging himself after the way indicated.

I passed a very anxious night, and that I might not dwell any longer than I needs must, under the harrow of suspense, I determined, as soon as

I had breakfasted, to call upon Fanny, and know the upshot. That she would veil the ungracious way in which I yielded assent to Halford's doing as he liked, I well knew; and that she would simply say that I gave him leave to show her the valentine. It was equally certain to me that she would lose no time in doing so; and that she would have sent and invited him to drink tea the evening before. By this morning, then, the worst would have been done that he had the power to do; and I would go and take the bull by the horns and see what came of it.

On asking the servant if Miss Bird was at home, she said she was. "But I don't think she will be able to see you, ma'am," she added, with some hesitation, but with something in her manner which led me to think that she had received orders not to admit me if I called. It might be so; and if Halford had showed Fanny the letter, it was only fit that it should be so. But be it how it might, I was not going to turn away from that house till I had ascertained what had passed. I am a very frail and undisciplined creature, but I possess a power of rising to the

occasion, which generally carries me through the exigencies which befall me; especially when, as now, they are such as I have brought upon myself.

“Could I speak with Mrs Bird?” I said.

She did not know; but if I would walk in she would see; and she showed me into the parlour, which was empty.

I may here say a few words relative to Fanny's parents, of whom I have hitherto had no occasion to make mention. Mr Bird was a medical man by profession, and an alderman of the corporation, and a magistrate by station. He was old, and feeble, and trifling in mind and manner; and nobody seemed to make much account of him, nor he of them. He passed the chief of his time in a room called his study, where he transacted his judicial business, and saw such patients as came to consult him; and now and then varied the scene by wandering into the parlour, and looking out of the window, or stirring the fire, and after a few minutes' stay, going back again to his own apartment. Mrs Bird was not of much more importance in her

sphere. She was advanced in years, and very feeble in health, being sometimes confined to her room for weeks together with severe attacks of chronic rheumatism. But when she was about, and occupied her place in the parlour, she was quiet and kind in her manner, and what might be called a nice little old lady ; more, however, from her not being in anybody's way, and never saying or doing anything to give offence, than from any capability she possessed of being an acquisition in the way of talent or talk, for she was very weak in mind, and, like her daughter Fanny, felt her safest position to be that of silence.

If the world had been sought for a person the least likely in the position of mistress of a household to inspire a sentiment of fear, Mrs Bird was that person. Yet such was the sense I had of her superiority at that moment to myself, that I inwardly quailed, when, after some time had elapsed, she came into the room.

“What was it that you wished to say to me Miss K—— ?” she said, with a very grave, but not an angry manner of speaking.

"I wish, ma'am, to know if Mr Halford has shown the valentine to Fanny?"

"He has. We have all seen it." "Then he is a villain," I replied. "I don't think so," she said; "I think there are those who have acted much worse than him." "Oh, Mrs Bird," I said, "you don't know how basely,—how cruelly that man has acted by me."

"Let him have acted how he might," she said; "they were not your friends, Miss K——, that put you upon this way of revenging yourself." I knew that this remark glanced at the Waltons, who Fanny would suspect of aiding me in the matter. "No one put me upon it," I said. "It was all my own doing—and deeply I regret it—more particularly as it concerns Miss Bird."

"I think you have cause to do so," she replied; "for Fanny did not deserve to be so spoken of. She is not clever like you;—but she loved you, Miss K——." Here the poor old lady's emotion stopped her saying more.

Willingly would I have knelt at her feet and acknowledged my great transgression;—but I felt that it could never be sufficiently forgotten to ad-

mit of the continuance of our acquaintance. Had I had any doubt on this point, she settled it by saying, "Of course there can be no further acquaintance between us. Neither Mr Bird nor myself could have any pleasure in receiving at our house a person who has spoken as you have of our poor girl." \*

"Certainly not," I replied—"I could not expect it;" and I rose to depart, which I did with a slight bend,—which she as slightly returned.

I was passing through the hall to the house door, when I perceived Fanny coming down the stairs, as if she had been watching for my departure. She was in tears,—but hastily came to me,

\* I am happy to be able to state that after the lapse of a year or so, my sincere penitence for my fault was fully accepted by Mr and Mrs Bird, as well as it had from the first been by Fanny. She continued on terms of intimacy with me to the time of her death. This event occurred under very melancholy circumstances in the winter of 1829. She had for some months been subject to pain in the chest, which she treated lightly, as thinking it arose from indigestion only; whereas it turned out to be heart disease. She had been spending the day with me, and the person who came to attend her home with a lantern having arrived, she prepared to go, but the night being bitterly cold, I wished her to let me send for a fly, especially as she felt the pain coming on; but she would not agree to it. She was only able to reach the house of a physician, where she went in for medical help, and almost immediately she entered his consulting room, she fell down and expired.

and extended her arms as if for a last farewell. I pressed her to my heart, and uttered the words, "*Do* forgive me." She answered only by returning my embrace, and then hastened up-stairs as if afraid of being seen talking to me.

I had promised the Waltons to call and let them know the result of my visit; so to their house I now bent my way; so broken, so humbled, that it was with any feeling but that of indignation that my mind was filled.

It was not wanting on their part. They heaped the heaviest terms of disgust upon what Martha called "such a consummate scoundrel."

"You must get this letter away from him," she said, "or he will show it half over the place, and who knows but that it may come to your father's ears."

She could not have suggested anything so calculated to fill me with dismay; for what his wrath would be, what the boiling rage of his Irish blood, to think that a daughter of his should pelt a scurrilous ballad (as he would call it) at the head of a gentleman of the university, because he would not marry her,—I could only too well



imagine, as well as the possibility of its exasperating me by its exhibition, in my present state of mind, to take the step of running away from home, and trying to support myself by the exercise of my talents elsewhere ; a step which only my love for my mother had yet hindered my taking. I was willing, therefore, to get back this hateful transcript if possible ; but how was it to be done ?

After a little consideration, she said that she saw a way of setting about it, and that immediately. Their father was out of town, and no one was in the counting-house at the yard but their brother. They could easily get him to vacate it, and I might write and ask Halford to come to me there as I had a matter of great importance to speak to him upon.

It was a strange, wild proposal ; but my affairs were in such a chaotic and terrible state, that I was ready to do anything that might tend to compose them. So I consented to her suggestion, and we all repaired to the mercantile premises, which were very near my father's house, and in part belonged to him.

Their brother, who, on the score of music, was an ally of mine, readily betook himself to some other part of the premises, and left the counting-house at our disposal. I sat down there and wrote these words :—

“I wish very much to speak with you *now*. Will you at *this moment* come to my father’s gate, where you will find

“M. A. K.”

I said nothing about Mr Walton’s yard or counting-house, inasmuch as I was certain that to neither of those places would he resort ; nor was there any need ; for I could meet him as well at the place appointed, which was close at hand. To be sure there was the hazard of my father coming in, or going out of the gate ; but if this had happened, Halford in former times had been a visitor at our house, though not an intimate one, nor yet a much-liked one by my father or mother ; and now, from his having so long ceased to call on them, regarded as an uncivil, disagreeable person. Still, if my father had come upon us, it might have seemed that Halford was going to repair his past neglect by a morning call. I showed my note to

the Waltons, and said that I thought it best to propose my own door for a place of meeting ; to which they agreed. I had so little to say to him, I observed, that a walk down the street would suffice for it ; and if he did come, I should see him approaching, and without his coming to my house at all, or going into the counting-house, the matter might be accomplished.

The note was sent by one of the boys in the yard with strict orders to bring it back, if Mr Halford were not in his rooms. But if he were, to wait for an answer.

The entrance to the yard commanded an extensive view of the street by which the boy was to return, and the two girls and I stood at it to watch for his coming. It was not long before we saw him, with a note in his hand, which he gave to Martha, (supposing her the person addressed, from her giving him his directions,) and which she handed to me. I have a distinct recollection that these were its contents :—

“ I see no good that is to be the result of a personal interview, when a letter will answer the

purpose ; to which, if you address me in proper language, I may be disposed to attend.—H. H.”

I handed it without speaking to Martha, over whose shoulder Sarah read it. “Villain,” — “wretch,” and the like epithets, bespoke the sentiments it excited ; but I had neither words, nor thoughts, to express. I was, as if I had been beaten till the sense of feeling was gone out of me, and like one that only wanted to find a place to lie down in, and rest,—or die,—I said I would go home and get a little quiet ; and by and by, I would write and ask him to return me the letter. They expressed all that was sympathising and affectionate, and we parted,—Martha begging me to be extremely careful what I said to him, and to let it be in as few words as possible. There was no fear, I told her, of my saying anything more to him than was absolutely necessary.

Mr Cecil remarks that a “stubborn and rebellious mind in a Christian must be kept low by sharp and trying dispensations. The language of God, in His providences to such a one, is, I will not wholly hide my face from thee. Thou shalt

sometimes meet with me ; but it will be in a dark night, and in a storm." \*

Many such dark and stormy nights have I experienced ; but this was the first that had overtaken me as yet, and assuredly, it brought with it an inward strength and guidance quite new to me.

I was aware, as I have remarked, that I had a power in me that enabled me to rise to the occasion ; but it was of a totally different character from that which now sustained me. The power that nature had bestowed upon me was that of energy, which seemed to make me capable of going through anything and everything that I was required to undertake. This, under the technical name of "destructiveness," was illustrated by a phrenologist, who examined my head, and wrote me the result in these words :—

"Destructiveness, unusually large. Had Miss K—— been of the other sex, she must have been a soldier, and a very courageous one."

But it was not by the energy of my nature, nor anything else that was in me, but the deep devotional sentiment, that, with my mortal members,

\* "Remains of Rev. R. Cecil."

“day by day was fashioned, when, as yet, there was none of them.” It was by this, the gift of God to a helpless creature, whom His Omniscience foresaw would so often, and so greatly need its aid, that my soul was at this time calmed and fitted to go through with the painful difficulty of addressing Halford properly.

The impression or direction on my mind after I returned home, was to be still for the rest of the day, and not to attempt to write to him till I had been composed by a night’s rest.

On the following day, I felt myself in a frame of mind to express what I wished to say to him, as it became me to say it—that is to say, without a particle of anger, but with a sense of injury which would most effectually vindicate its justice, by being developed in the fewest and most temperate words that I could use. I perfectly remember them ; and they were as follows :—

“ In acknowledging to you, Mr Halford, that I am the author of the letter you have received, I, at the same time, make a request that you will return it to me, as it can now have no further

purpose to serve. With respect to the wound you have inflicted upon Miss Bird, I can only say, that as it was aimed at me, it would have been better if it had come from any hand but yours.

“M. A. K.”

I received a reply in the course of the following day, in these words :—

“Mr Halford presents his respectful compliments to Miss K——, and much regrets that a severe headache prevents him to-day from complying with her request ; which he can never cease to lament had not been preferred sooner.”

On the following evening, as I was making tea, my father and mother only being present, an old confidential servant put her head in at the door, and said, “You are wanted, Miss, if you please.”

As soon as I got into the kitchen, which opened upon the court-yard in which our house stood, she said, in a whisper, “Mr Halford is at the kitchen door, and wishes to speak with you.”

If he had fixed upon a time in the whole day, which was the most unfavourable for an interview, this was it ; for my father would soon be out of



patience at my leaving my duty as tea-maker ; and to add to the probability of his sending to desire me to come back and finish my business, a little beast of a dog I had, set up such a barking, that I expected nothing else every moment, but that my father would bodily come forth to know what was going on.

It was with as much trepidation on this account as from the presence of Halford, that, without speaking,—and I may say almost without seeing him, for in the obscure light of a March evening I could not discern his features,—I took the letter he extended to me, and hurried into the house. Something he said in a low and agitated tone, but I could not tell what. I heard nothing, I saw nothing, I thought of nothing, but getting back as fast as I could into the parlour ; and here was the end of the story of the valentine. I ought to state, that the solution of Halford's conduct in withdrawing so abruptly, and, as it seemed, so dishonourably, from my acquaintance, was shortly found in his leaving college, and marrying a lady of fortune, to whom he had been long engaged.

That he had suffered his affections to wander for a time from her and to settle upon me, I cannot doubt; nor that it was a sense of the danger of again becoming unfaithful to her, that occasioned his strict avoidance of me after his return to college. The intercourse, which during the long vacation had restored him to his affection for his betrothed, had also, no doubt, awakened him to the wrong he had done her, in suffering himself to love any one else. The last poor woman he loved would, to be sure, have reason to think herself but hardly dealt with. But as one of them must be a victim, it seemed but fair that it should be her who had the least claim to be spared.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

THESE are simple facts ; circumstances that once had actual occurrence in my history ; and that caused me the most severe suffering. It is no dream that I have been relating. But what are the facts, and what is the suffering which the lapse of more than fifty years does not seem to transmute into a vision of the night ?

Mr Emerson, in his chapter on Illusions,\* has a striking passage illustrative of the combat and the close of human strife and struggle with the events and circumstances of life ; though I should like it better if it had less of a pagan and poetical, and more of the Christian character in it. "There is no chance and no anarchy in the universe," he says. "All is system and gradation. Every god is there sitting in his sphere. The young mortal enters the hall of the firmament : there is he alone with them alone ; they pouring

\* "Conduct of Life," p. 202.

on him benedictions and gifts, and beckoning him up to their thrones. On the instant, and incessantly, fall snow-storms of illusions. He fancies himself in a vast crowd, which sways this way and that, and whose movement and doings he must obey; he fancies himself poor, orphaned, insignificant. The mad crowd drives hither and thither; now furiously commanding this thing to be done, now that. Who is he that he should resist their will, and think or act for himself? Every moment new changes and new showers of deceptions to baffle and distract him. And when, by and by, the air clears for an instant, and the cloud lifts a little, there are the gods still sitting around him, on their thrones—they alone with him alone." A comment in pencil which I find at the end of this passage observes:—"But why the heathenish term of 'the gods'? Why not the one true God,—that ALONE of which Plotinus speaks as the soul's divine object, and whose prayer he sublimely terms, 'a flight of the alone to the Alone'?"

It is a precious true and consoling word of Scripture which says, "Thou shalt forget thy

misery, and remember it as waters that pass away.\* “Oh consider,” says an old and deeply experienced minister of God, in writing to a sorely exercised soul,—“consider that word which says of the Lord, that ‘His fire is in Zion, and His furnace at Jerusalem.’ And how doth He purify the soul of man but by casting it into the furnace of affliction? There the deep, sore, distressing anguish finds out both the seed and the chaff; purifying the pure gold, and consuming the dross; and after that, a quiet state is witnessed, and the quiet fruit of righteousness is brought forth by the searching and consuming nature and operation of the fire.” And thus it is that misery is only remembered as “waters that pass away;”—waters which, as the same old writer from whom I have made the above quotation observes, are that vale of tears which it is good for the soul to pass through; since by virtue of them the corruptible part is day by day washed away. It was so, I trust, with me. In a small measure—a very small one, for it was yet but “the day of small things”†

\* Job vi. 15.

† “Who hath despised the day of small things?” (Zech. iv. 10.)

with me—I think I may venture to say, that the trial through which I had passed, exercised a beneficial effect upon me. I became a reader of more profitable books, which I might be said to study, as well as to peruse ; for I was in the habit of making frequent and long extracts from such parts of them as applied to the practice of self-control, and the mental discipline which recent experience taught me to perceive how greatly I needed, and of which I had seen, and been taught so little, by those who had the guardianship of my youth.

Assuredly, if any one more than another has cause to say with David, “O God, thou hast taught me from my youth,”\* I am that person ; for, by means of books that have fallen in my way, as well as by the ministry of events, which are sermons in themselves, I have received lessons which I could never regard as any other than the teaching of God. .

Amongst the books which at that time were of the greatest service to me, was Adam Smith’s “Theory of Moral Sentiments,” which my good

\* Psalm vii. 17.

friend Professor Smyth put into my hands. In that work the author's favourite doctrine of, "*The man within the breast*," very deeply and profitably impressed me, by making me understand the priceless value of possessing, and of obeying, an interior Guide whose dictates were infallible. In after years, this view of an inward and spiritual instructor, was opened up to me in the writings of the mystics, with far greater unction than by Adam Smith. In the pages of the last writer, it is discussed on the ground of philosophy ; but in those of the mystics, it is exhibited for what it actually is ; and therefore, as no other than the immediate revelation of the Spirit of God. Nevertheless, it is worthy of remark, that in the writings of the philosopher and the mystics, it is the same divine truth which both of them are engaged in discussing. Only, with the one it is "the man within the breast," that designates this holy oracle ; and with the other, it is what the apostle expresses as "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

In the "Phædo" of Plato, accompanied by a comment of Dr Whewell's, there is a passage which so perfectly illustrates what I am saying,



that I will here give a place to both the one and the other—and from that in the “Phædo” first:—

“The soul is made to wander and err, and become giddy, as if intoxicated, because it is brought into contact with, and disturbed by, changing and inconstant things.\* But when it contemplates objects by means of itself alone, [that is to say, by the light of the holy Spirit, or, as Smith calls it, ‘the man within the breast,’] it is drawn towards whatever is pure, and unchangeably eternal; and as related to the immortal things, it remains ever with them. When it is given up to itself, [or this man within the breast,] its wanderings end; because it is disturbed by nothing else, and therefore it becomes uniform and steady in its objects; and this condition we call wisdom.” †

\* “They also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way: the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment,” (Isa. xxviii 7.) Surely, in every newspaper of every day, we may see this spiritual intoxication illustrated. People “err in vision, and stumble in judgment,” through besotting themselves, by drinking of that Babylonish cup, “that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad,” (Jer. li. 7.)

† “Platonic Dialogues,” by Dr Whewell, vol. i. p. 388.

On the sentiments thus propounded, Dr Whewell observes :—

“Such teachers have proceeded from a nation of whom Plato probably never heard. The Hebrew disciples of a far greater teacher, referred to other proofs than Socrates here expounds. Yet some of them, as Paul of Tarsus, did not disdain to illustrate the subject, by references to speculations of the Greeks; and, in addressing the Athenians four hundred years after Plato, referred to convictions of natural religion, such as Socrates and his disciples had cherished.”

But while I am thus gravely discoursing of the excellent books to which I gave my attention, after the mental discipline to which I had been recently subjected,—I shall, doubtless, be reminded that, upon my own showing, the sharp lesson I had received, and the philosophy I studied, did not suffice to prevent my once more becoming the victim of misplaced affections. It is true that the fault and misfortune of permitting my mind to wander into a hopeless, and consequently, an imprudent attachment, again overtook me; for, you may believe me when I say, that I did not

seek it. It stole upon me unawares ; and no one could reprove me more severely than I reproved myself, for being thus unguardedly entangled in a snare that had been so dangerous, and from which I had been delivered, as Job says, "by the skin of my teeth."

The simple truth is, that there is a necessity in the nature of woman, that she should love something. Hence, how common it is, when doomed to a life of what is by courtesy termed "single blessedness," for her to gather about her, dogs, cats, birds,—anything, in short, that may receive that current of her affections, which denied to run in its proper channel of connubial and parental attachment, *must* somewhere, and in some way, find a vent, though it be only in this poor way of expending itself. I am never without a cat ; which, being a stay-at-home, quiet sort of animal, is more especially adapted for being the recipient of an aged spinster's regard. One does not, however, settle down to this sort of love, in early life ; and it was yet early life with me, when I fell into intimate association with a person of very

engaging manners, and a most accomplished mind.

When a woman's heart is disengaged, (and you may rely upon it, I made it my business as speedily as I could, to disengage mine from the thralldom into which it had been betrayed,) I do not believe that it is possible for her to be in habits of friendship with a man to whose superiority of mind she looks up for the edification of her own, without becoming attached to him with more or less of the passion of love. Especially is such a result to be expected, when her domestic life is far from being the scene of peace and comfort, which it is needful for human happiness that it should be; and more particularly for that of woman, whose lot, much more than that of man, constrains her to dwell at home.

Upon one plea or another, men can always get away from domestic discomfort; but women have no alternative, but to remain in its hard grasp, and bear the pressure as best they may.

It was a vast help to my enduring it, that I had elsewhere a source of consolation; though it had

its alloy, as every human spring of comfort has. Here it was not so much found in the hopelessness, as in the folly of the feelings it awakened—the captious and totally unreasonable expectation of being considered first and foremost upon all occasions, which usually gives such an exacting character to the attachment of a sensitive woman,—and of which, at the very time that I indulged it, I felt ashamed, was of itself a species of misery;—which, as very often tending, by the ill-humour and caprice it occasioned, to lower me in the estimation of the very person I most wished to please, was sometimes increased to a degree of remorse that was agonising. For what sentiment of the soul is there that causes such an intensity of anguish as remorse?

“Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,  
Our fatal shadows that walk by us still.”

I remember in a charming little tale by Mrs Inchbald,\* one of her chapters begins with some such sentence as this. As I quote from memory, I do not pretend to give it verbatim, but the sum and substance of it runs in this wise:—

\* “Nature and Art.”

“Reader, whatever your sins and sorrows,—whatever your trials,—kneel down and bless God, if you have not to add to them the anguish of remorse.”

There is certainly no distress so piercing as the consciousness of having acted unworthily,—even when, as, happily in the present case, the misconduct is rather the result of excessive sensibility than defect of principle. Well has Rousseau said, “Que c’est un fatal present du ciel, une âme sensible!” Yet, accompanied as this episode in my history was by error and by pain, it was of inestimable value in promoting in me a deep and abiding sense of religion. I turned to no earthly source,—no “broken cisterns that could hold no water,”—for the relief I needed. It was not in my nature to do so, but rather to carry my case of suffering to the physician of value, even to Him of whom the prophet so touchingly testifies, when he says, “O Lord Almighty, God of Israel, the soul in anguish, the troubled spirit, crieth unto thee.”\* Truly can I set to my seal that this divine Helper did “know my soul in adversities,” and, in the course of His providence, by means

\* Baruch, (Apocrypha,) iii. 1.

of these very things that seemed as hindrances, fulfilled that precious word of promise, "Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth."\*

\* Jeremiah xxxiii. 6.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

I MAY now take leave of the digression into personal details wherein I have been so long wandering, and return to the impressions of the present day and hour, with which, when I commenced this record, it was my purpose to fill it.

A circumstance that occurred to-day, of no importance in itself, but as the means of exciting a new and curious feeling in my mind, may be worth alluding to. A pamphlet was sent me from one of the Public Offices, containing a list of the surviving nominees (of which I am one) of a Government Tontine that was instituted in the year 1790; and in which my father took a share for each of his children, of which I was the youngest, and at that time an infant of a few months old.

On looking it over, I found amongst the sur-

vivors the names of two women, each past eighty, who were my school-fellows at the boarding-school in Norfolk, to which I was sent before I was nine years old ; that is to say, about seventy years ago.

“Dear me ! are they still alive ?” was the thought that first crossed my mind ; soon, however, corrected by another, which reminded me that they might as well say the same of me ; since, according to the old proverb, it might be said of us all, “that when one died of old age, the other might quake with fear.”

It was one of the most curious of sensations this thinking how we should, perhaps, all be wondering to find each other living. To make a query upon such a point seemed so strange ! I remembered then a little circumstance to which at the time (some forty, or perhaps fifty years ago) I paid scarcely any attention, as not perceiving the point of it. This was Professor Smyth’s telling me that, in paying a visit to Mrs Barbault, she had told him how curiously she felt, on reading lately an American review in which her name was mentioned, and a note appended, which stated that

"we do not know if this venerable lady is still living."

It is with some reason that Young has remarked that—

"All men think all men mortal but themselves."

It was not only on this ground that the pamphlet brought by to-day's post was suggestive to me; for it also brought before the view of my mind the recollection of my juvenile companions, whom I had not seen certainly for sixty-six years, with a vividness of delineation which seemed to corroborate a remark I have somewhere met with, which asserts that "*nothing dies* in the storehouse of memory; but that whatever once had a being there, remains for ever immovable and unaltered."

It seemed so in the present instance; for not only did the forms and faces of my two school-fellows return to my "mind's eye," but other images came before it that had been forgotten for as long a time. The governess, the teachers, the servants of the house, the grounds where we walked, the church we attended, and the queer snuffling old parson who always, after giving out his text, used

to say a few words respecting it, much after the fashion in which the heading of a chapter gives its contents ; and then invariably went on with observing, "*And this, if you please, shall be the subject of the following discourse.*" All this, as clean forgotten by me as if it had never existed, started into life as by the wand of a magician.

I remained some time engaged in meditating, not on the sublunary reflections to which these images of the past gave birth, but on an idea which they revived, and which it is always pleasant to me to entertain. This is a belief that the past scenes and circumstances of our individual lives, with all their relations to our experience, and their bearings upon our conduct and its consequences, will, in another phase of our being, be seen by us at a glance, just as in looking at a picture we take in at once—all its details. It would seem that this is not altogether a fanciful idea, since it is reported of persons who, by drowning, have been brought to the point of death, and afterwards restored, that they have said that the last remembrance of their consciousness was, that they had a sight and sense in the glance of a

moment, of every circumstance of their whole past life.

There is a passage in a work of Fénélon's which has a bearing on this subject.

"My brain," he says, "is like a closet full of pictures. I distinctly remember that I have known, what I do not know at present; I remember my very oblivion. I call to mind the pictures, or images of every person in every period of my life wherein I have seen them formerly; and thus, the same person passes several times in my head. At first, I see a child; then a young, and afterwards an old man. I place wrinkles on the same face, in which on the other side, I see the tender graces of infancy. I join what subsists no more, with that which exists now; and, without confounding these extremes, I preserve I know not what; but which by turns, is all that I have seen since I came into the world."\*

It seems to me that all that can be gathered from contemplating the marvels amidst which we "live, and move, and have our being," is, as Mr

\* "On the Existence of God," p. 96. English edition, 1720. Taylor, at the Ship, Paternoster Row.

Emerson beautifully expresses it, that "we lie in the lap of immense intelligence, which makes us organs of its activity, and receivers of its truth. When we discern justice, when we discern truth, we do nothing of ourselves, but allow a passage to its beams. If we ask whence this comes, if we seek to pry into the soul that causes—all metaphysics, all philosophy is at fault." \*

From wondering that my old school-comrades were still in this world, I passed into speculations whether they were thinking about another ; into which they, as well as myself, must, in the course of nature, shortly pass. I seemed to have forgotten, or to have mistaken, that I was as near to death as themselves, in the surprise with which I found that they were yet living ; perhaps, I might be mistaken also, in thinking that I was contemplating, as constantly, and as steadily as I supposed I was, the near approach of my own decease ?

My thought on this query is, "that I must be my own dupe—and a very foolish one, if I am thus misled."

\* Essay on Self-Reliance.

A passage in one of Mr Emerson's essays then came to my mind ; not altogether consolatory, though somewhat encouraging:—"It would be hard," he says, "to put more mental and moral philosophy, than the Persians have thrown into a sentence :—

“ ‘Fool'd thou must be, though wisest of the wise ;  
Then be the fool of virtue, not of vice.’ ” \*

“ Fooled I may be,” I said to myself, “and doubtless am, in many ways ; but I am not fool enough, on the brink of fourscore, to put from me the nearness in which I stand to the event of my own death. I know that I think of nothing else, as the event to which I have to look forward ; and for which it is as much the dictate of common sense to be prepared, as it would be to have my clothes packed up and ready, if I were going to take a long journey, on a long absence, to-morrow.”

No kind of reading is so interesting to me, as that which relates to death-beds. The first thing I do, when a book of the biography of those who are deceased is put into my hands, is to turn to the part which gives an account of their last

\* “Conduct of Life, p. 202.”



hours; and I do this with the personal interest in the matter with which one that was about to travel on a dreary road, beset with strange mysteries, and unknown circumstances, would eagerly seek for the experience of those who have travelled that way. And I usually feel that some sense of encouragement accompanies these studies; something which assures me that "To die is to begin to live. It is to end an old, stale, weary work, and to commence a newer, and a better."\*

It is sweet to me to believe, that, as it is stated in a book I was reading this morning before I rose, that "in the history of pious men, in moments of pain and affliction,—the external world disappeared, and they plunged into the profoundest depths of their innermost life." An instance is then related—

"It was in the year 1461, when the Hussites were undergoing a cruel persecution, that a pious man at Prague, called Georginus, who was brought to the rack, and stretched upon it, became in an extraordinary manner insensible to pain; and at

\* Beaumont and Fletcher.

length, seeming to be lifeless, he was taken up and left for dead. After some time he came to himself; and wondered what occasioned the pain he felt. On beholding his wounds, and the tools of the executioner, he remembered what had happened, and related a dream which he had during his torture. 'I thought,' said he, 'that I was in a green and beautiful meadow, in the midst of which stood a tree loaded with fruit; and on the tree were perched many birds, who ate of the fruit and sang melodiously. And amongst the birds I beheld a youth, who, with a small rod, appeared to regulate their movements, that none should go too far, or get out of his place.' "

There seemed to me something sweet and beautiful in this; regarding it as a symbol, in the birds, of the thoughts of the heart, feeding upon truth; and watched over, and checked by the spirit of truth, when in danger of forsaking their right provender. But to return to the subject we were upon.

I admit, that whatever the preparation of heart we may make, and with all the strength with which we may try to fortify our minds

respecting death, there is somewhat in the amazing transit we have to make, which cannot be otherwise than appalling to the natural mind, and which causes it, as by an instinct, to recoil from it as something inconceivable ; something with which it seems surprising that we should have a real, close, actual, personal concern ! Even in the case of those who might be supposed habitually to regard it, as not merely that with which their chief business lies ; but as an object of desire, inasmuch as they are ever setting before their fellow-creatures in their prescribed mission as teachers, the blessedness of the righteous in the world to come, and the paramount duty of living for that world ; even in the case of these persons, the presence of death often comes before them as a surprise, — perhaps, as a shock.

I was struck with an instance of this only a night or two ago, in reading the life of the Rev. Henry Venn Elliott. Referring to his busy ministrations and their sudden ending, “Take notice,” he said, “that after so long and active a ministry, the manner in which the Lord’s termination of it came

upon me was like a thunderbolt.”\* But there are exceptions to this sense of surprise, and to the feeling of recoil of which I have spoken, as the instinct of nature at the thought of death. The natural is sometimes counteracted by the predominance of the supernatural at this great crisis. It was my privilege to know two saints of God whose last hours—and last years, I may say—were seasons of unintermitting joy at the prospect of their departure from this scene of sorrow. I do not remember ever leaving the company of either of these women, without feeling the better for having been with them. On quitting the presence of one of them but a few days before she died, after staying but a very short time, as I perceived that she was in pain, “My dear,” she said, “I must not move so much as my little finger;” meaning that it was only by strict obedience to the holy command, “Be still, and know that I am God,” that she found strength to support her trial. These were the last words I heard her utter; and I regard them as a precious legacy

\* “Life of the Rev. Henry Venn Elliott,” by Josiah Bateman, M.A., p. 364.

of divine counsel to one whose poverty of self-control needed that she should be thus enriched. "Oh how sweet it is to die!—how very sweet!" she said, a few hours before her release. With respect to the other dear friend, her attendant told me that her joy at the approach of death was not to be expressed. "Longing for the time," was the young woman's description respecting the state of mind of her mistress, and in the case of both these individuals, though great sufferers on the physical side of their being, it was no feeling of weariness at the length and severity of their bodily trial that caused their yearning for deliverance; but it was an acquaintance with the nature of God as Love,—as the source and centre of the perfection of beauty, wisdom, and goodness,—which occasioned in both of them a longing which is best expressed in the words of the Psalmist, wherein he says, "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" Sweet are these lines by Adelaide Proctor, gone also to her rest:—

“Why should'st thou fear the beautiful angel Death,  
Who waits thee at the portals of the skies,  
Ready to kiss away thy struggling breath,  
Ready with gentle hand to close thy eyes.

“Oh what were life, if life were all? Thine eyes  
Are blinded by their tears ;—or thou wouldst see  
Thy treasures wait thee in the far-off skies,  
And Death, thy friend, will give them all to thee.”

If amongst my readers there are those who take as deep an interest as I do in anecdotes that testify of happiness in a dying hour, they will not reckon me tedious if I prolong the subject with transcribing from a book I lately read, the following account of the death of Judge Howe in America :—

“For some time he had a severe struggle, in which not only his body seemed to suffer, but his spirit to sigh for deliverance. Three hours before his death, perfect calmness. He most fervently recommended to his friends ‘charity,’—‘charity to all!’ He alluded to a dream he had had some short time before. He thought that ‘he stood on the piazza of his house enjoying the sunny prospect; a mist arose and covered the sun. Then, after some time, a beautiful sunset.’ He now mentioned to his wife that he had had a pre-

sentiment of that moment, (his present dying circumstances.) His wife spoke of the beautiful sunset of his dream. 'And all the mists are gone,' he said, and shortly afterwards expired." \*

That there should be a natural avoidance of meditating very long and very deeply on the subject of death, whilst the individual is able, and is required by circumstances, to engage in the business, and allowable, not to say necessary, recreations of life, is a merciful ordination of Providence. Without this restraint of nature, it would seem that the reason of the thing would prompt perpetual anxiety respecting a circumstance so uncertain as to the time of its appearance, but so inevitable in its coming, as the hour of death ; the only hour of which, from the time of our having any hours to number, we are sure of the arrival. As some one has only too truly said, "To be born, is to begin to die." But the mercy of God shields His poor creatures under all the inevitable circumstances of their condition ; and our greatest trials are often those which our want of confidence in Him produces. Of all the

\* "Life of Dr Follen," p. 154.



miseries that humanity is called to experience, I do think an anxious mind is one of the greatest. I have been its victim all my life. Could I separate from my experience my real sorrows from the ideal ones, the actual burden I have had to bear would be wonderfully diminished.

“An old French verse,” says Mr Emerson, “runs thus in my translation:—

“ ‘Some of your griefs you have cured,  
And the sharpest you still have survived ;  
But what torments of pain you endured,  
From evils that never arrived.’ ”\*

It is the want of faith that sharpens every human woe ; the creature cannot trust the Creator.”

“No spiritual effort,” says Coleridge, in his last illness, “seems to benefit me so much as the one earnest, importunate, and often, for hours, momentarily repeated prayer, ‘I believe ; Lord, help my unbelief ! Give me faith, but as a mustard-seed, and I shall remove this mountain ! Faith—faith—faith ! I believe ; Oh, give me faith ! Oh, for my Redeemer’s sake, give me faith in my Redeemer !’ ”†

\* “Conduct of Life,” p. 165.

† “Reminiscences of Coleridge,” by Cottle, p. 332.

## CHAPTER XXV.

AS an incentive to trust ourselves in the hands of God at our last hour, I was struck with a remark which a lady not long since repeated to me, as made to her by the medical man who was attending her in a severe illness, and to whom she was expressing some anxiety as to what would be her fate if she died. "She wondered who would receive her—who would take care of her in so new and strange a condition as that of a disembodied spirit?"

"Did you know, or think about, who was to receive, and take care of you, when you came into this world?" he replied. "Not a jot. Yet you were expected and provided for, without any care of your own; and so you will find it where you are going."

I have a very constant and comforting idea of

the ministry of angels, and believe them to be ever benevolently busy in attending upon, and helping, the helpless denizens of this sad world.

Blake, the painter, in his wild but often beautiful strain of thought, has, in the following lines, given forth some sweet ideas upon the ministry of angels;—ideas which float over the mind like the music of an Æolian harp :—

“ Farewell, green fields, and happy groves,  
Where flocks have took delight ;  
Where lambs have nibbled, silent moves  
The feet of angels bright.  
Unseen they pour blessing,  
And joy without ceasing,  
On each bud and blossom,  
And each sleeping bosom.

“ They look in every thoughtless nest,  
Where birds are cover’d warm ;  
They visit caves of every beast,  
To keep them all from harm.  
If they see any weeping,  
That ought to be sleeping,  
They pour sleep on their head,  
And sit down by their bed.

“ When wolves and tigers howl for prey,  
They pitying, stand and weep ;  
Seeking to drive their thirst away,  
And keep them from the sheep.

But, if they rush dreadful,  
The angels, most heedful,  
Receive each mild spirit,  
New worlds to inherit."

It is rather obscure what "mild spirits," are here designated ; but if it should be the lambs, kids, rabbits, and the like, on which the wild beasts "rush dreadful," it is a most sweet and consolatory thought to believe that there are "new worlds" for them to "inherit," as well as for man. "All death in nature," says Fichte, "is *birth*,—a new garment to replace the old vesture which humanity has laid aside in its progress to higher being."

This thought of "higher being," as that mode of superior existence to which a whole creation is progressing—a "creation that groaneth and travaileth in pain until now"—is so fraught with comfort, and so suggestive of a purpose full of the power and wisdom of Omnipotence, that it seems wonderful how any thoughtful and intelligent mind can pass it by, to take up with the one-sided, narrow views of many sectarian religionists. But the sentiment of wonder at this, or at any other sort of fanaticism, must yield to the amazement

with which the votaries of common sense, to say nothing of the advocates of religion, can condescend to give a moment's attention to what goes by the name of spiritualism, or, as Mr Emerson more justly calls it, "*the rat and mouse revelation.*"\*

"I cannot but believe that these answers by mysterious raps," said a lady to me, as we were one day speaking on the subject of table-turning, spirit-rapping, and the rest of it,—“I cannot believe but that some kind of unearthly spirits, are the agents in these matters.” “And suppose they be,” quoth I, “grant that these raps, and knocks, and table-lifting, and walking on the ceiling *are* testimonies of the presence and agency of spirits, what does it prove, but that elsewhere, as well as here, there are feeble, foolish, crafty, contemptible beings, even more foolish and feeble than the knaves and knavesses of this world ;† for these *can* give an answer to the questions put to them in

\* “Conduct of Life,” p. 129.

† Dr Henry More is recorded by his biographer to have said, “that he had a long time thought it, and not a few times said it, that there are as errant fools out of the body, as in the body.”—*Life of Dr More*, by Rev. Richard Ward, p. 178.

a simple, intelligible way. They may be, and probably are, giving utterance to what is false in every word they speak ; nevertheless, they *can* speak it. They are not driven to the miserable, clumsy, utterly despicable contrivance of rapping out replies to another contrivance, equally contemptible, that of questions which have to be *spelt* out, letter by letter, from an alphabet."

I can scarcely conceive upon what ground it has been possible for this wretched mummerly to obtain a moment's attention on the part of persons, so gifted with mental power as some of those are whose names are mentioned as its patrons. But it is a remarkable, and a very repulsive, trait in human nature, even in its higher range of thought and position, that it will often permit itself to be arrested and interested in very paltry and unedifying exhibitions of what is unusual, and seemingly unaccountable, in the annals of mundane occurrences ; whilst it will cast a glance of scornful incredulity upon circumstances equally mysterious, but which, from the undoubted truthfulness of the testimony by which they are guaranteed, as well as the wisdom and goodness of the purpose

they illustrate, are worthy of an attention of the most reverential kind.

In confirmation of this, I will here venture to relate a narrative,\* which, at the time I first heard it, (now more than thirty years ago,) made an impression upon me of the most vivid and edifying kind; but which I have, in most instances, seen treated with a smile of contempt, as indicating a species of fanaticism that was pitiable on the part of the persons whom it concerned. It came to me first, when I was passing an evening *tête-à-tête* with a person prominent in the Society of Friends; and who, knowing my great interest in the written experiences of the primitive members of the Society, had kindly opened a box which contained some of those memorials in a manuscript and

\* The circumstances of this incident appeared to me so remarkable, that, not many years since, I drew them up in the form of a tract, which I gave it to a publisher of such things. I do not suppose that it obtained a wide circulation, or any at all, indeed, except amongst the elderly members of the Society of Friends. These, I am persuaded, would readily endorse this narrative, as received by themselves and their predecessors for undoubted truth in every one of its details. I believe there is somewhere else, than in my tract, a published account of this transaction, but I do not know anything about it. At all events, I am quite sure, that neither by that, nor yet by mine, is the incident itself much known.



unpublished state. After reading me a bit here, and a bit there, of these choice documents, "Now, here is something," she said, "which I know, M. A. K., will interest thee deeply. If thou art not indisposed to give a little more time to it than we have bestowed upon the others, I will read it to thee." Of course, I consented, and she proceeded to the perusal of the following statement; which, I need not say, I do not give from any remembrance of what I then heard, but from a manuscript of the circumstance which some years afterwards was lent by me another member of the Society. It is headed with these words :—

"The following account of a memorable instance of divine guidance and protection which attended James Dickenson and Jane Fearon, both of Cumberland, when on a religious visit to Scotland,\* in the early part of their labours in the gospel, was related by themselves, when each was about eighty

\* Supposed to be at the latter end of the seventeenth, or the beginning of the last century. I may also mention, that it is inferred in the Society, that James Dickenson and Jane Fearon were man and wife; though by a practice not unusual in the north, in those days, she is here called by her maiden name.

years of age, to Sarah Taylor, when she was about eighteen—the one of them assisting the other in recollecting the circumstances as they related them to her.”

It was in the northern part of that nation they were travelling, with a person whom they had procured for a guide, to a town they proposed to reach that night. But as it was a very long stage, and the rain coming on heavy, and Jane growing exceeding fatigued, she wished much to have taken up short of the town, if a suitable place offered, which their guide assured them would not be the case. Nevertheless, both of them being exceeding weak and weary, and coming up with a good-looking house, James rode up to it and asked if they could have lodgings and necessary accommodation there for the night. They were told that they could, upon which they determined to stop.

When the guide saw this, he appeared to be very averse to it; but finding that they decided to alight, he bid them farewell, saying they had no further need of him. He evidently left them with regret, but having strongly remonstrated against

their calling there at all, before they went up to the house, he did not seem disposed to speak further in the hearing of the family.

On their alighting, they were shown into a little room with a fire in it, which opened into the kitchen or common room, where the family dwelt. Their horses were taken care of, their wet things put to dry, a posset was made for them, a cold meat-pie brought for their supper, and apparently they seemed likely to be comfortably accommodated. But, from their first sitting down in the room, they both of them grew very uneasy ; yet each of them, not knowing how the other felt, determined to keep silent about it.

At last, Jane, unable to restrain her thoughts, observed that she felt a bad opinion about things. In fact, she said "that her apprehension was so great, and her notion of the place and people so bad, that she believed that the pie that was set before them was made of *human flesh* !"

Though thinking as ill as herself of the family, James Dickenson scarcely believed what she supposed of the pie ; saying that he had eaten of it, and thought it very good.

Whilst they were sitting in this room, the door being partly open into the other, they observed three very ill-looking men come in, and in a low voice tell the landlady, that "they had good horses."

"Ay, and good saddle-bags too," she replied.

This increased their uneasiness ; and James became closely engaged\* to seek for divine counsel, as to how he should move in the case. Under this exercise of mind, he was favoured to believe that if they kept close to that which was near to help them, and *attended to its pointings*, they should be preserved, and a way would be made for their escape.

I must pause here, to ask the reader to contrast this man's serene and dignified way of seeking supernatural guidance, and the holy calm with which his faith in its interior directions covered his mind, with the clumsy artifices, the bat-like flittings and flappings, the Jew's-harp jinglings and janglings, and the rest of the hocus-pocus, which, in the dealings of the modern spiritualists,

\* This expression of "closely engaged" is peculiar to the quakers of the primitive times ; and means, as here used, not that James outwardly and visibly prayed, but that he retired into deep silence, to *feel*, as it were, his way.

are supposed to reveal intelligence from another world, and, as Mr Home lately replied in a court of justice, to the counsel who inquired the use of these manifestations,—“*to prove the immortality of the soul.*” But to return :—

With inward reliance on the gleam of spiritual light thus shed upon his path, James took his first step by asking about their lodgings. “They had business to transact,” he said, “and should want candles, and would be glad to retire to their chamber.”

They were shown across a yard into a room in which there were two beds, but the door had no bolt to it. This was alarming, but on looking round, James observed a form or bench in the room, and found, on trying, that by setting one end of it to the door, it would just wedge in between it and the foot of one of the beds.

When they were thus shut in, poor Jane sat down, and began to weep bitterly and wring her hands, and in her distress to say, that “she believed they should never go out of that house alive.” On this James sat down by her, and told her to “be still.”

“He had been under great distress of mind,” he said, “from their first sitting down in the house ;

but that under his exercise, he had sought divine help ; and his mind had been favoured by that which never yet had failed him, to believe, that if they carefully attended to its pointings, they should be directed how to escape."

They then both sat in perfect stillness for some time, attentively waiting for interior direction. At last James said, that the time for them to flee for their lives was come.

Having observed on their first entrance into the room, a door opposite to that at which they came in, they discovered on opening it, that it led to a flight of stairs on the outside of the house next the road. James then said that he believed that was the way by which they were to get off. He then bid Jane pull off her shoes, and also put off his own. They then opened the door, and on doing so, they perceived a light shining through a chink between the first and second stair ; and were able to see, in the place beneath it, a woman engaged in sharpening a knife, which they apprehended might be designed for their execution.

Going softly down the steps, and on the road, till out of hearing of the people of the house, they

then set off as quickly as they could ; James desiring Jane to run, and taking her arm to assist her in getting forward. After proceeding about half a mile in heavy rain, they discovered a kind of hovel or shed for cattle, where they tried to rest a while on some straw that had been left there. They soon, however, found, by painful impressions enforced upon both their minds, that *this* was not a safe halting-place. So, notwithstanding her extreme fatigue, and her being ready to sink with dread and dismay, James felt that he must urge upon Jane the necessity of their rousing themselves to further exertions ; which he forthwith did ; at the same time encouraging her with a firm hope that they should be preserved. Accordingly they once more set forward as fast as they could, till they came to the side of some water, the course of which they followed to a bridge, over which they were attempting to pass ; but when they got to the middle of it, James felt such a stop in his mind, and altogether so much restrained from proceeding, that he said at once, "This is not our way." They therefore returned, and again went on, keeping the course of the stream ; which, when they



had gone about half a mile farther, increased greatly in breadth.

Having stopped a short time, James said that they must cross the water at that place; a proposal which greatly alarmed Jane, who was so totally overpowered with discouragement, that she could scarcely lay hold of the least hope that they should not wholly sink under their trying circumstances. "She believed," she said, "that if they went into the water, they should be drowned;" as indeed, to mere human apprehension, seemed only too certain. But James stood firm to his faith in their invisible, but present Helper; and endeavoured to cheer her by repeating the inward evidence he had of their preservation, if they only kept a steady eye to that divine direction which he felt assured had led them there; and which instructed him to believe that their way was through the water at that place, and that they should get safe to the other side. Hereupon Jane, sustained by the strength of his faith, rather than her own, took hold of his arm, and ventured with him into the water, and they got to the other side in safety.

After walking some distance, they came to a sand-bank, and sat down for a short time ; but presently James said, "I am not easy ; I feel that we must go farther yet." Upon this poor Jane replied, "Well, I can only go by thy faith ; I know not what to do."

On going a little farther, they met with another sand-bank, wherein was a cavity in which they sat down ; and after they had been there a little while, James said, "I am now easy ; I believe we are perfectly safe, and I feel in my heart a song of praise and thanksgiving."

"I cannot say so," replied Jane ; "I cannot so much as say, Lord have mercy upon me !"

They had been here about half an hour, when they heard the noise of some people on the opposite side of the river ; upon which Jane was greatly alarmed, fearing they should be discovered.

"Our lives depend upon our silence," James softly said to her. On this she became quiet ; and both of them attentively listening, they heard these people frequently urging on a dog, by repeating the words, "Seek them, Keeper—seek

them." There was little doubt that these were the men they had seen at the house, now accompanied by a dog. The probability was, that the dog losing the scent of their feet at the bridge, had regained, and followed it, along the river side to the place where they crossed. There, being baffled, he had stopped, whilst the people kept urging him on with the cry of, "Seek them, Keeper!"

They not only distinctly heard this cry, but also saw a lantern which these men had, and heard one of them say, "They have crossed the river."

"That is impossible," said another; "unless the devil himself took them over; for the river is brimful." After wearying themselves a considerable time in their search, they went away, and were seen no more.

When daylight appeared, they saw a man on a high hill at some distance, looking about him every way, as if trying to discover some trace of them.

They continued quiet in their retreat till some time after sunrise; and then, upon surveying the place, they perceived that under the first sand-

bank where they rested, and from which they removed, they might have been discovered from the other side of the river; whilst the place in which they remained, shaded them from being seen on the opposite side.

On considering what they should do to recover their horses and saddle-bags, James said he felt inclined to return to the house; but Jane proposed going to a town in order to get assistance to go with them. He objected to this; that the town from which assistance was likely to be procured was about ten miles off; that they were strangers there, and that their reason for taking such precautions in returning to the house, implied a high charge, which they might not be able to prove; and that thus occasion might be taken against them, to throw them into prison, by magistrates more disposed to use an opportunity of vexing them, than to search into the cause of their complaint.\*

Jane still hesitating, he said, "I cannot but

\* We are to remember that at this period, when state-prosecutions for nonconformity were rife, the Quakers were, of all religious sects, the most the objects of cruel and constant persecution.

incline to return to the house ; as I fully believe that our horses, our bags, and everything will be ready for us, without our being asked any questions ; and that the people we saw last night, we shall see no more."

"I cannot—I dare not go back," she replied.

"Thou mayest safely do so," he said : again encouraging her by adding, "*for I have seen it in that which never yet deceived me.*" On this they returned to the house, and found their horses standing in the stable, saddled, and their saddle-bags upon them ; their clothes dried, and laid ready to put on ; and saw no person but an old woman sitting in a nook by the fire-side, whom they did not remember seeing the night before.

They asked her what they had to pay, and having discharged it, they proceeded on their journey.

About two years after this time, James Dickenson happening to be travelling the same way on a religious visit, passed the place where the house above mentioned had stood ; and found that it had been totally pulled down and destroyed ; and on coming to the inn at the town which they

intended to have reached, when they took up their quarters at this place, he inquired what was become of the people, and the cause of their house being pulled down ?

He was told that, at such a time (which happened to be but a little while after he and Jane were there) some travellers who had been observed to go there to lodge, were missing ; and the place having for a long time had a very bad name, and the people being strongly suspected of murdering many who had gone to them, the whole neighbourhood rose with one consent to beset the house, and arrest the people.

On searching the premises, the bodies of the missing travellers were found, with others in different stages of decomposition. The people of the house were tried, and five of them executed ; and the house razed to the ground.

As it regards myself, I perfectly believe every word in this remarkable narration ; but I do not believe that many persons will be found who will look at it for a moment as a veritable record of actual facts. The cause of their refusal to

do so, I think, may be found in the increased adherence to material things, and consequent contempt and scorn of everything that does not minister to the will and wishes of the fleshly mind, which (always a characteristic of human nature) has now become human nature itself; unredeemed by any other faith in the spiritual world, than is to be obtained at a *séance*, presided over by such ministers as have lately been exhibited to public observation in the case of Mr Home!

Well does Mr Emerson remark, "There is faith in chemistry, in meat and wine, in wealth, in machinery, in the steam-engine, galvanic battery, turbine-wheels, sewing-machines, and in public opinion; but not in divine causes."\*

\* "Conduct of Life," p. 128.



## CHAPTER XXVI.

IT has been more than once suggested to me, that in the case just narrated, in which James Dickenson conceived himself to be specially guided by divine direction,—a ready solution for such a belief on his part is to be found in the tenet peculiar to the Quakers, of being what they call, “moved by the Spirit.”

Now, it is a curious circumstance, that these very people who repudiate as fanatical, Dickenson’s faith in being moved, or directed by the Spirit; and would accept in preference to such a faith, any other kind of supposed supernatural interference; as, for instance, a dream—a presentiment, coming nobody knows whence—nor for what end, or perhaps, even the “rat and mouse” revelation of raps and table jumps; these are the people who are strict in their

own religious observances ; and, above all, in a regular attendance at church, where, amongst the first words they hear, and as giving the reason why they are there to listen to any words at all, are those of "*the Scripture moveth us.*"

It must be conceded, and I am quite willing to make the concession, that these are persons who give to the Bible an avowed superiority to the Spirit, by calling the book "the Word of God." I am not going to discuss the preposterous incongruity of giving precedence to the words of a book, addressed to the outward ear, over the "still small voice" of that Holy Spirit which addresses the inward part of the man ; and that part, we are to remember, where this very book instructs us to believe, "God will make us to know wisdom."\* "Ah, but do you remember who inspired that book?" they say to me, when I speak thus.

"Perfectly," is my reply ; "and I know on my own experience, that many parts of that book are the dictates of the Spirit of Truth. But I have not come to this knowledge, because I found them

\* "In the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom," (Ps. li. 6.)

*there* ; but because I found in the depth of my own soul, a measure of the same Spirit which gave the same truth to the writer in the book ; and this measure of truth *in me*, recognises its own nature in the language of Scripture, and constrains me, *on the strength of this inward testimony*, to accept of what I find there to which it bears witness. I reverence, and consider it my duty to accept, both modes of instruction ; but I regard the ever-living, ever-present Teacher in my own soul, as my primary and all-sufficient Guide ; and one so perfectly infallible, that I would accept of nothing as truth which He did not confirm and respond to."

It is a wise remark of a learned and wise man, that " there is a flesh and a spirit, a body and a soul, in all the writings of Scripture. It is but the flesh and body of divine truths that is printed upon paper ; which alone, many moths of books and libraries feed upon ; many walking skeletons of knowledge, who bury and entomb truths in the living sepulchres of their souls, and converse only with these ; men who never did anything else but pick at the mere bark and rind of truth, and crack the shells of them. But there is a soul and spirit

of divine truth, which could never yet be congealed into ink, which never could be blotted upon paper ; which by a secret traduction and conveyance, passes from one soul unto another, being able to dwell or lodge nowhere but in a spiritual being,—in a living thing,—because itself is nothing but life and spirit.”\*

Of the fallacy involved in making the Bible the first, and in fact, as most religious professors take it,—we may say, the *only* guide of the human being,—we may discover an illustration, and no insignificant one, in this very case of the Quakers, which we have been considering. For, are we to suppose that James Dickenson and his companion, who had neither of them (as far as it appears) a Bible at hand to turn to in their doubts and difficulties,—are we, I say, to suppose that on this account they are to be regarded as fanatics, for imagining that they had a sure and safe guide, without it, in “the light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world”? Rather than yield assent to this doctrine of immediate inspiration,

\* Dr Cudworth. From “A Sermon preached before the House of Commons, March 31, 1647, being a day of humiliation.”

the sticklers for the supremacy of the Bible would, I am persuaded, insist upon it, that it was by thinking upon some particular text that Dickenson was influenced to be so confident of safety ; and then they would refer to certain passages of Scripture, which the man probably remembered, and acted upon.

Be it so, is my reply ; he might, and probably had, a recollection of such passages ; and very precious passages they are. But these, as leading to general or universal conclusions, were not exactly what he then stood in need of. He, and his helpless companion, required at that moment some specific directions, adapted to their personal exigency ; just as they might have wanted to know the best way and means of going on their journey the next day ; and under this necessity had inquired of the people of the house for information. It would have been a very excellent precept to set before them, as an answer, that word of Scripture which says, "Trust in the Lord, and He shall bring it to pass ;" but I apprehend it would not have met the case in question. James might have the most distinct recollection

of the text which says, "Order my steps in Thy word ;" and very probably would prefer that very prayer to Him in whose Word they trusted. But for the way in which their steps were to be taken, they would find no specific direction in the written Word. Happily, however, for them, the Word in which they trusted, and to which they referred, was not confined to a book ; but was living, and present, and speaking, and acting as the Guide that ordered their goings—step by step.

As it regards either the Spirit or the letter, I have heard it said that the matter of which of them is the leader is of no importance, so long as people obey their convictions.

Our convictions are unquestionably our proper and only efficient guides ; for conviction is only another name for feeling ; and just as much as we *feel* the power of anything, are we convinced of its truth. Therefore, to be firmly built up on our convictions, is to rest upon a stand-point on which we feel the ground firm under our feet. Mr Emerson carries his reliance on the force of conviction, or, as he terms it, "*living from within*," to a startling length :—

“Nothing is at last sacred,” he says, “but the integrity of your own mind. I remember an answer which, when I was quite young, I was prompted to make to a valued adviser who was wont to importune me with the dear old doctrines of the Church. On my saying, ‘What have I to do with the sacredness of traditions, if I live wholly from within?’ my friend suggested, ‘But these impulses may be from below, not from above.’ I replied, ‘They do not seem to me to be such ; but if I am the devil’s child, I will live then, from the devil.’” \*

We need not go so far as this, to be perfectly assured that it is of the utmost importance that human beings should possess a principle of faith which affords them an interior resting-place—a rock of defence—a consciousness of shelter ; in short, somewhat to which they instinctively resort for help and comfort in all their various exigencies. In order to feel, and be established in this divine principle, this counsel from a mystical writer, whose words have often been greatly blest to my own soul, may be found useful :—

\* Essay on Self-Reliance, p. 9.



“Thou art to know,” he says, “that thy soul is the centre, habitation, and kingdom of God. To the end, therefore, that thy Sovereign may rest upon that throne,—thou oughtest to take pains to keep it pure, empty, and peaceable. Pure from sin and error; quiet from anxiety; empty of affections and desires, and peaceable in times of trial and temptation.”\*

This sentence describes a proximity of the creature to the Creator, which it is, indeed, very solemn to contemplate as actually existing. But that we live much closer than we are aware of, and far more so than we are willing to believe, to spiritual and invisible agencies, I am well assured of.

“Nor think, though men were none,  
That earth would want spectators, God want praise.  
Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth,  
Unseen, both when we wake and when we sleep.”

—*Milton's Paradise Lost.*

Besides that, I have, on more than one occasion, been clearly aware of interior pointings to a particular line of conduct, (much oftener to one of passivity

\* The Spiritual Guide of Michael Molinos; who died in the Inquisition at Rome, 1688.

than of action,) I have also been sensible of supernatural influence in the *felt* presence of departed spirits, with whom, in the days of their flesh, I was particularly associated. And of their nearness, I was not made aware by any raps on the table, or anything addressed to my senses; but by a peculiar sweetness that accompanied the idea of the beloved departed friend; and a feeling of the presence of that individual, flowing over my soul, gently and soothingly, like “the waters of Shiloah that go softly,”\* and which instinctively prompted from my grateful heart, ejaculations of “wonder, love, and praise.”

But it is fit that I should state that these favours have been “few and far between;” and always, as it seemed to me, conditional on a prepared state of mind,—a state in which suffering, patiently, prayerfully, and long sustained, had paved the way for their appearance; a state well described by the afflicted patriarch when he says, “God maketh my heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth me.”† In this condition of brokenness and sorrow, the faithful sufferer is occasionally made to experience the

\* Isaiah viii. 6.

† Job xxiii. 16.

reality of that word which says, "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy ; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."\*

With those persons, who, by faith, have obtained an experience of the meaning of that scripture which speaks to some as having come to "the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to *the spirits of the just made perfect*,"†—this sense of the presence of departed friends is not unknown.

Writing a letter of consolation to one who had lost a friend, who was dear to himself, as well as his correspondent, Fénelon says, "It is only the senses and the imagination that have lost their object. He whom we do not see is more truly with us than he ever was. We shall meet him in our common centre. Although I have not seen him for many years, yet I have felt as if I conversed with him. I have opened my heart to him, and

\* Isaiah lvii. 15.

† Hebrews xii. 23.

believed that we have met in the presence of God.”\*

On the death of Edward Burrough, a valued minister amongst the early Friends, George Fox, writing to those of the Society who were the most likely to feel and deplore his departure in the prime of life,† thus expresses himself:—“Be still and quiet in your own conditions, and settled in the seed of God that doth not change; that in *that, you may feel dear E. B. among you.*”

On this point, of our being “compassed with so great a cloud of witnesses,” Dr Henry More speaks out boldly, by placing a great part of the felicity of those who “have died in the Lord,” in being in communion with those who are yet in the body, and especially in being helpful to them. He says, that “having had so palpable experience of the human condition, with more sweet and compassionate affection, they are ready to help and assist

\* Spiritual Letters.

† He was imprisoned in Newgate, with more than a hundred other members of the Society, for refusing to take an oath in a court of justice; and the jail fever breaking out, he fell a victim to it in the year 1662. His last words were, “Now my soul and spirit is centred in its own being with God!—and this form of person must return from whence it was taken.”

those souls that are yet toiling in human bodies, if they be good and simple-hearted. For the high pleasure of all holy and divine souls is to be ministers of the goodness of God; which they could not be, if there were not subjects fitted for their beneficence; that is, creatures in exigencies and straits, as simple and well-meaning souls are here, in the body.”\*

“Remembrance,” says Schelling, “is but a feeble expression to convey the intimate connexion which exists between those who are departed, and those who remain. In our innermost being we are in strict union with the dead; for, in our better part, we are no other than what they are—spirits.”

In such “exigencies and straits,” (to return to Dr More’s view of the case,) as those of James Dickenson and Jane Fearon, for instance, if the doctor’s sentiments are founded in truth, we may safely believe them to have been assisted by the beneficence of the departed spirits of “the just made perfect.” These, however, are subjects which, when offered to popular notice, must be but briefly

\* Ward’s “Life of Dr Henry More,” pp. 294, 295.

handled. In order to be rightly received, they demand a reverential frame of mind, and a preparation of heart, which can scarcely be looked for except in comparatively few and special cases.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

WHILST engaged in writing these pages, to which my condition as a Solitaire almost necessarily imparts a character of egotism, the thought has repeatedly crossed my mind, if it were not better altogether to refrain from writing, than to employ it chiefly in relating the history of my own mind. Yet, the succeeding thought has suggested, that, upon the whole, I obtain a degree and kind of mental correction out of the employment which is of great value ; for, not only are the glimpses one obtains of one's own heart, and its extreme treachery, admonitory, and, so far, useful ; but a lesson is gained by the journalist of his own thoughts and feelings, which is calculated to enlighten him as to their actual insignificance, which can scarcely fail of being beneficial. This lesson is found in the contrast



which he is compelled to make between his own excessive interest in his occupation and its results ; and the indifference with which, probably, his most intimate friends, and certainly the public, will regard what has been to him of so much importance.

Till circumstances have taught him this lesson, the engrossing nature of his employment entirely conceals from him the fact, that, charming as may be this mental portrait-painting to himself, it is a very small matter to other people.

Mr Emerson, in his graphic way, admirably exhibits this. "Each young and ardent person," he says, "writes a diary, in which, when the hours of prayer and penitence arrive, he inscribes his soul. The pages thus written are to him burning and fragrant: he reads them on his knees, by midnight, and by the morning star. He wets them with his tears; they are sacred; too good for the world, and hardly yet to be shown to his dearest friend.

"After some time has elapsed, he begins to admit his friend to this hallowed experience; and with hesitation, yet with firmness, exposes the

pages to his eye. Will they not burn his eyes?

“The friend coldly turns them over, and passes from the writing to conversation, with easy transition, which strikes the *other* party with astonishment and vexation. He cannot suspect the writing itself. Days and nights of fervid life, of communion with angels of darkness and of light, have engraved their shadowy characters on that tear-stained book. He suspects the intelligence or the heart of his friend. Is there, then, no friend? He cannot yet credit that one may have impressive experience, and yet may not know how to put his private fact into literature; and perhaps the discovery that wisdom has other tongues and ministers than we, and that though we should hold our peace, the truth would not the less be spoken, might check injuriously the flames of our zeal.”\*

The days of youth, with its fervent heat, have long been passed with me; and the experience of a more advanced period has delivered me from indulging any dreams of making a sensation by the productions of my pen. I may confidently

\* “Essay on Nature,” Second Series, p. 125.

believe, that I am not likely to be either surprised or mortified by the indifference with which any work of mine may be received. I know enough of the world to be quite aware that literary vanity, when it gets upon stilts, and goes about like other exhibitors, who beat a drum, and gather a crowd to see them dance in the highways, is pretty sure of being soon and sharply corrected.

I think, therefore, I may hope to obtain credit, when I say, that it is not under an idea of being interesting, but in the hope of being instructive, that (added to the need of occupation) I have engaged in this employment.

The insight which such an occupation affords to a writer, of the truth of that word of Scripture which says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," \* is highly instructive, not only to the individual himself, but to all who may read his lucubrations; supposing, of course, that they are persons who read with some more definite and useful purpose, than to get rid of time.

Of the amazing delusion in which we may

\* Jeremiah xvii. 9.

be wrapt as to our standing with respect to our faithfulness in the details of life, even when the general habit of mind is that of sincerity, we can scarcely be aware, until we scrutinise ourselves much more rigidly than in the usual routine of life we are accustomed to do.

I met with an amusing specimen (I call it amusing from the ingenuous *naïveté* with which it is exhibited) of this insensibility to the deceivableness of our nature, until we have set ourselves to pull it to pieces, as it were, and examine it bit by bit, in a remarkable book, which first fell in my way more than thirty years ago ; and which then made a very mixed, but, nevertheless, a strong impression upon me ; so strong, indeed, that on seeing it within the last month, in the catalogue of a dealer in old books in Paternoster Row, I immediately wrote to secure it as my own.

It was rather a singular coincidence, that it was not a *copy* of the book which had been lent me so long ago by a friend in a provincial town, that was sent to my order ;—but the identical book itself, which I had then and there read, and which I recognised the moment I opened it, by seeing my

friend's name in his own handwriting on the blank page of the first leaf. The decease of my friend had, no doubt, caused his library of very choice and rare books to be sent to London for sale.

Of this particular one of which I speak, when I state that it is from the pen of the celebrated Lavater,\* it may, perhaps, gain for itself from some few persons, (in these days, I am aware, they will be but few,) something more than a brief and casual attention.

It is worth more,—not on account of any deep views, either in a way of philosophy or religion, that it contains, but as an unquestionably faithful picture of the mind of a remarkable man ; and, as it has a bearing on the subject we are discussing, and is, in itself, a curious illustration of the advantages and disadvantages of that subject, and, moreover, a scarce publication, I will endeavour to merge my own egotism for a time in that of this

\* The title runs thus :—"Secret Journal of a Self-Observer ; or Confessions and Familiar Letters of the Rev. J. C. Lavater, author of the Essays on Physiognomy, the Aphorisms on Man, &c. Translated from the German original by the Rev. Peter Will, minister of the Reformed German Chapel in the Savoy."

writer, by quoting from him somewhat copiously. I hope this may prove to the relief of the reader ; who, I fear, has, by this time, been wishing me to make my obeisance and take my leave.

The period at which the journal commences is the 1st of January 1769.

After a pious invocation for divine help, to enable him so to pass his time from that period that "every one of his days might be distinguished by at least one good deed,"—the journalist addresses his heart, by desiring it to be sincere. "Do not conceal from me," he says, "thy secret recesses. I will make friendship, and erect a covenant, with thee. Know, my heart, that no friendship is wiser and more abounding in blessings, than the friendship and intimacy of a heart with itself. He who is not his own confidant, can never become a friend of God and virtue."

We have here, I think, in another form, Adam Smith's idea of "the man within the breast." As I think Lavater's strain in his opening sentences is a very just one, I will go on with them a little further. "The more we shun ourselves," he proceeds to say, "the nearer we approach to hypoc-

risy ; and there is nothing I despise more than a hypocrite."

"Those who know the human heart have made the just remark, that we cease being sincere as soon as we perceive that we are observed. But it is just the reverse with a rigorous observation of ourselves. We always begin to be sincere as soon as our heart perceives that we watch its sentiments." It strikes me that there is a great deal of truth in these observations of Lavater ; for, in this view of the case, the habit of noting down our thoughts and feelings, is calculated to make us faithful in dealing with ourselves. I have more than one person in my mind at this time, who, I feel confident, would no more talk to *themselves* confidentially, than they would talk confidentially to the strangers they met with in a railway carriage ; and what seems to me the nature of these persons ? Just that which Lavater describes as bordering upon hypocrisy, from the fact of their "*shunning* themselves."

It is a precious maxim of holy writ which desires us to "commune with our own heart, and be still." Having finished his introductory



remarks, he proceeds to lay down certain rules of conduct, all extremely good ; but which, in their specific details, would be apt to be tedious. They possess also the inherent defect of all prescribed rules, except those of the multiplication table, and the rest of the dogmas enshrined in Cocker's arithmetic—viz., that they are perpetually liable to be infringed by the force of circumstances. The best lesson we learn from drawing up for personal use a code of rules, which we are tolerably certain of violating, is, to live by the rule and demand of the day and hour ; or, in other words, to make it a principle always to act up to the dictates of conscience, with a fixedness well expressed in Pope's Universal Prayer, by the supplication,

“ What conscience dictates to be done,  
Or warns me not to do ;  
This, teach me more than hell to shun,  
That, more than heaven pursue ”—

and then, taking things as they come, and people as they are, to shape our conduct, as it respects both things and people, according to the light which the present moment brings with it. It was wise counsel of a good man, writing to a friend, who,

I suppose, might be (as a Scotch gentleman once told me that I myself was) "*fearful foresight*,"—to have nothing to do with forehand contrivances ; for they never succeed. God turns all His dispensations another way.

"Let us be content," says Fenelon, "to follow the light of the present moment, without looking farther. It is our daily bread which God gives us for the day. It is like the manna in the wilderness, and he that would gather a double portion and make provision for the ensuing day, deceives himself ; for it will corrupt in his hands."

Lavater had to experience this as a sad but certain truth ; for, though on the 1st of January, amongst many other excellent resolutions, he determined "never to sleep longer than eight hours at the most, when in health ;" and also, "with the assistance of God, to accustom myself to do everything without exception in the name of Jesus Christ ; and as His disciple to sigh every hour to God for the blessing of the Holy Ghost, and always to be disposed to prayer,"—the journalist has to record that January the 3d was "a day full of confusion. I could neither

read, meditate, nor work. I slept with an unaccountable heaviness till it was broad day. Very likely I should have tossed myself about in my bed some time longer, if the insufferable smell of the extinguished night-lamp had not caused me to open my eyes. I was a-bed till nine o'clock. What a sight to angels!"

If they were of the kind that Blake describes, they would not have been very angry; at all events nothing nearly so much so as he was with himself. He proceeds in his self-castigation, by relating his further delinquencies.

"It was nine o'clock, as I have mentioned, when I rose, vexed at the smell of the lamp. The tea-kettle was on the table, the water almost boiling over; the sun shone through the half-frozen windows, so dazzling that I was ashamed of myself, and grew so uneasy that I did not know what to do."

Still burdened with the burden he had laid upon himself, in resolving to be always wakeful, and ready to get up at a prescribed time, our poor journalist goes on harping on the same string,—  
"Why did not some one wake me?" Then tor-

mented with the smell of the expiring candle, feeling, no doubt, as everybody feels, that when one thing especially disturbs the mind, every other untoward circumstance mixes with it, and lends its aid to make, perhaps, a mole-hill into a mountain,—“What a terrible stench is this!” he goes on to say, or rather to write; for all these soliloquies, we are to remember, are to be recorded in black and white, and to be read, it would seem, a hundred years hence by persons whose ancestors were not yet born. Abruptly turning from the smell of the lamp, he records his next words,—“Where is my tobacco and my pipe?” Then reverting to the tumult of his interior kingdom,—“Thus,” he says, “thus was I putting one question after the other to the servant who was just entering the room.

“‘Only the third day of the year,’ said I to myself, as soon as I was left alone, ‘and commenced in so shameful a manner!’ It is so cold in the room, thought I, at the same moment, before I pursued the first idea. I went to the fireside,—No fire yet! Somebody knocked at the door. I opened it, and Mr M. was standing there. ‘I hope I do not disturb you,’ said he. ‘Not in the

least, I am extremely glad you are come.' And yet I was very much displeased at it, because I had something to do."

Mr M. then propounds the purpose of his visit, which is to read Lavater a manuscript, on which, if agreeable to him to hear it, he wishes his opinion. He assents, "with great pleasure."

Mr M. begins to read with "emphasis, and his looks seemed to demand applause. I smiled and nodded, as if highly pleased; and, to confess the truth, I hardly knew what he was reading, so much was I absorbed in thought, and so little disposed to be attentive. Now he finished. 'Excellent!' exclaimed I; 'I hope you will publish it.' 'Your approbation,' he replied, 'has sufficient weight with me, to encourage me to venture it. But you are too indulgent. Dare I leave this manuscript with you that you may look it over?' 'There is no occasion,' I replied; 'however, if you insist upon it, I will peruse it once more. I am sure I shall like it better on a second perusal.'" It is but reasonable that such palpable untruth should elicit the comment of "O heart, I have flattered, and have been a hypocrite!"

On looking over the manuscript, he finds it filled with unpardonable defects, and accordingly rebukes his heart by saying, "Thou hast deserved it, and now thou art punished." The puzzle then comes of what steps he is to take in the matter. "How shall I retract my first opinion?" he asks. "Shall I confirm it?—That would be abominable. Give a contrary opinion?—How humiliating." The conflict is ended by his writing a letter to Mr M., and sending back the manuscript, honestly confessing that the opinion he had given in the first instance, was that of "an inattentive, regardless, and discomposed man." He then observes, "I have taken the liberty of marking those passages which, as I think, require correcting. The very same which I, as far as I can remember, seemed to approve. It is I, and not *you*, who ought to blush, that my present opinion is quite the reverse of the former."

The note being despatched, he recovers his spirits; and goes on to say, "I now was alone, and could have performed what I had neglected in the morning;"—to wit, the reading his rules, and saying his prayers. "However, I was too

lazy. I was indisposed ; filled my pipe, and called for a candle. The candle was brought, and company announced."

The whole evening was spent in empty talk ; and he concludes the journal for this day, with remarking that it is " the last which he will spend this year in such a manner."

It is refreshing to the reader of this morbid exhibition of a mind diseased by efforts at self-government, undertaken without due consideration of the exceeding weakness of humanity, to come to an entry in a day or two, which testifies of emotions more healthy and cheerful.

"I awoke in good time, and asked my wife if she would join me in prayer ; and we rose up and prayed, God be praised—not without feeling and devotion—Oh, how do I praise Thee, omnipresent Love ! Tears of heart-felt joy bedewed my cheeks ; and the most noble and Christian thoughts flashed through my tranquil and serene mind."

Very soon, alas, this pleasant condition has to be exchanged for a return of one of self-reproach and discomfort, and all through what seems to



have been a peculiar besetment of his, to lie in bed late in the morning. "I have again begun the day," he says, "with unpardonable laziness. I tremble at my glaring inconsistency in whatever is good—at the incredible contradictions which I daily perceive in my principles, actions, and omissions. Shall I never be able to bring them to a perfect harmony?"

"Never, Lavater," I would have whispered in his ear; "never, whilst you spend the strength you should use in *sinking down* into interior silence, and, *in that silence*, standing firm as a rock against the incursions of vain, evil, and agitating thoughts; *never*, believe me, whilst, instead of doing this, you run, as it were, into the very arms of these assailers, hear what they have got to say, argue with them, and, if that is not enough, when you have done talking to them, go to your desk, and try to recall it all back again, in order to record it in your journal!" I could speak this with great confidence, because, in my own case, I have known how impossible it is to come at anything like internal peace in any other way than by silent, patient endurance of the

assaults of painful thoughts ; and the getting up as quick as I can, when, through transgression, I have got a fall, and resuming my way with more caution.

Till by long and terrible conflicts with that strange morbid habit of all sensitive minds, of yielding to distressing thoughts, I had obtained a clear sight of the right way of conquering them, and steadfastly adhered to it,—I have sometimes been followed by a haunting thought, till I felt as if I must run out of the house half crazy, to get away from it.

Fretted by the disorder of spirit which he knew neither how to calm nor how to endure by any clearly defined and practical principle, Lavater goes on to relate :—"I tossed myself about in my bed, deaf to the voice of conscience, and callous to the recollection of the pleasure which my early morning devotion had afforded me yesterday, and slumbered till it had struck eight o'clock.

"Angry at my wife's question, 'Whether I could not pray and read with her,' I sat down ; and at first could not resist the impatient wish to have finished the morning prayer, which I was reading from Zollikofer's hymn-book. Yet some good

thoughts penetrated through the mist which clouded my mind. Having finished my prayer, to which I added some hymns, my mind grew more serene. . . . I now went to work with great serenity; kissed my wife, and thanked her. 'If you had not invited me to pray,' I said, 'God knows what would have become of me this day.'

The good wife, who seems to have been all he could want or wish in a helpmeet, pressed his hand, replying with unspeakable meekness, "Go with cheerfulness to your work; you can still do much good this day."

On going down to dinner, he found a friend whom his considerate wife had invited in order to cheer him, and give him an unexpected pleasure. I am afraid Mrs Lavater was greatly accessory to the manifold peccadilloes of her husband, by being too careful of his ease, and humouring him more than was good for him. "Men are but children of a larger growth;" and, like the smaller ones, are greatly the worse for being too much indulged.

At this dinner, "a bottle was overturned and broken to pieces. A gentle, smiling look from

my wife, restrained my rising anger." On this occasion one of the company related the following story :—

"A pious man once received a present of a very costly set of china. He would not accept it. However, it was sent back to him again. At last, he accepted it, and gave the porter some money to drink his health—took a key from his pocket, and broke it to pieces with the greatest coolness. 'Very likely,' said he, 'some person may happen to break it, and it is not less likely that it then may occasion a sinful anger in the heart of the possessor, or a secret anxiety in the mind of him that breaks it. If it should be admired and frequently used at my table, I might by degrees grow so fond of it, that it might irritate me, if anybody, or perhaps myself, should break it through carelessness. I will therefore prevent anything of that kind.' "

"This story," Lavater goes on to say, "edified me very much. A great deal was said for, and against it. I thought that it was a wise and noble deed."

Here we have a striking specimen of the danger which attends a habit of too constantly, and too

closely inspecting the motives of our actions. Mr Cecil says that "a tender conscience is a great blessing; but a scrupulous conscience is a great curse." I do not remember being guilty of anything so preposterous from interior scruples, as the incident here related. But I too well remember when, at one period of my life, a wild, Irish fanatic, hovered about my sick-bed, and fearfully disturbed my mind with suggestions of this and the other strange thing that religious duty required of me, that I durst not accept a present, that was calculated to please or administer comfort to the flesh, upon any consideration.

A dear old Fellow of a college, who had been a family friend for years at my father's house, having sent me a pheasant whilst I was in this half-crazy state, I felt compelled to return it. It was the same with baskets of fruit, choice bottles of wine, &c.; I dare no more have touched them, than I dare have drunk aquafortis. I can scarcely think of these things without a shudder, which is not ameliorated by the conviction that, extravagant as they were, they resulted from a pure and strictly conscientious motive.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

I CANNOT quit the journal of Lavater, without recording a few more extracts from it. A visit which he mentions his paying to a dying friend, is too curiously characteristic of the versatility of his thoughts and feelings to be passed over. He thus introduces it :—

“When I awoke, a messenger was waiting for me, delivering a letter from my friend —— at H——, who entreated me to pay him a visit, if possible, for he was very ill. I was frightened, and yet this intelligence had something pleasing in it, though, God knows, I love my friend sincerely. His death would grieve me much. It is not the first time that my fright occasioned by afflicting intelligence, seemed to be mixed with secret joy.\*

\* Rochefoucault's very unpalatable maxim seems to crop up here :

I recollect to have felt once, on a sudden alarm of fire, something so very pleasing, that, on cool reflection, makes me shudder. Was this sensation the effect of the novelty, and the suddenness of the alarm, or of the presentiment of the concern which those with whom I should have an opportunity of conversing on that incident would show, and which is always somewhat flattering to the narrator? Or, was it, which is most likely, the consequence of the joyful sensation of being exempted from the misfortune which befalls or threatens others?"

This, in all probability, was the sentiment that produced pleasure; as it must also be the latent source of the intense interest people take in newspapers. I often feel ashamed of the eagerness with which I read something headed with "Fearful Calamity."

"I should like to know," he goes on, "what passes in the minds of other people, and particularly of those who have a humane feeling heart, when they are surprised by important, and, at the same time,

"There is something in the misfortunes of our best friends which does not displease us."



afflicting intelligence. However, I apprehend that most of them either do not pay proper attention to situations of that kind, or are too anxious to hide their feelings from others, and, perhaps, from themselves."

Happily for the regular course of human affairs in general, and the sanity of many human minds in particular, people are likely to be too much engrossed by considering the external circumstance, with which they are concerned, to turn *within*, in order to anatomise and speculate upon the feelings it excites. If this were their habit, the reading of a daily newspaper would occupy the greater part of the day, from the self-observation it would promote on the thoughts and feelings which its details of crime and misery would produce.

Lavater sets off on his journey to visit his sick friend, taking with him the New Testament, in order to select from it some passages to read to him. "I took it out of my pocket and opened it. The first passage that struck me was, 'Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.'" He comments on this a while, and then proceeds: "We came to a farrier's. 'We

must stop here,' said the postilion, 'the horses' shoes must be fastened, and one which is lost replaced.'

"Impatience ! impatience ! how busy wast thou in my heart. I hesitated whether I should not get out and walk, as we were only one league distant from the abode of my friend. At last, being told that we should not stop above a quarter of an hour, I resolved to remain in the carriage." He then takes out his memorandum-book, and continues his journal. It would seem that the business at the farrier's was greatly prolonged, for the journal records that he exclaimed, "Well, postilion, have you not done yet ? You make it d——d long !"

This was a delinquency of speech that was likely to awaken remorse. "Like a flash of lightning, it darted through my soul, '*Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.*' No ! no ! I cannot hide it from myself ; I do not for a single hour continue to think, to act, and to talk like a Christian !"

We may pass over a great deal of sentimentality, connected with the meeting between him and his

friend. The poor man was in a dying state, and departed in the course of the night. A very minute account is recorded in the journal, of the effect which his death had upon Lavater ; and which, though affectionate, and I daresay sincere, would have no interest here. It may be enough to say on this part of the subject, that, though his love for his deceased friend evinced itself in the most pathetic language, whilst he stood over his lifeless remains, the variableness of his nature affected him with different emotions soon after—emotions of dread, which he thus alludes to :—

“Being quite alone, one pair of stairs higher than the corpse, I was seized with such horror that I hardly ventured to lift up my eyes, and to leave off writing ; I hesitated whether I should extinguish the candle or not.” Descanting for a short time upon this weakness of mind, he states :—“I grew a little more composed, rose up, undressed myself, extinguished the fire, and went to bed. Oh, how much had I to think, to feel, and to pray ! However, I was tired, and fell asleep.” He wakes the next morning with

feelings and reflections, which supply ample materials for some two or three pages of the journal ; which, he says,—“I continued thus far. I cannot but confess, though reluctantly, that love of diversion and a secret aversion from praying, prompted me to do so. I would rather write down, and confess all my follies ; but no, not all—I never would confess them all—I have no true desire to mend my life. My better feelings, my good resolutions, and my virtues, all depend on accidental and external circumstances ; and even these circumstances frequently lose their efficacy, after a few minutes. I will not write a word more ; I will lay down the pen, and pray ; will pray, because I have a secret aversion to doing it.” This acknowledgment, as might be expected, is met with great consternation :—“What a horrid thought ! I walked up and down the room ; began to sigh repeatedly, and to be afflicted on account of the stubbornness and inconstancy of my heart.

“O merciful God,” I said, “why am I so averse to conversing with Thee ? Shall my heart ever remain cold ? Oh, when shall I be enabled

to confide in my feelings?" Here we have a clue to the error in which this poor man was so closely enfolded. He sees the mistake of permitting his good resolutions, his virtues, &c., to depend upon accidental and external circumstances, and how even those circumstances lose their efficacy after a few minutes; and yet he here yearns for ability to confide in his feelings, that is to say, in the impressionable part of his nature, which is the most likely to be the sport of external circumstances. The plain intelligible fact is, that in a world, and in a nature like ours, where external influences are perpetually acting upon the emotional side of our strange, mixed, mysterious being, we must place our dependence upon something more steadfast and immutable than our feelings. "To be sure," would be the reply of the religious professor. "You must depend upon religion as your guide, your comforter, your all in all."

"I am quite ready to agree to this," says the tried and troubled soul. "But, nevertheless, your answer is too vague. You must describe to me what you mean by religion." I shall not meddle

with the response which this remark would elicit. Any one who desires to be informed on that point, merely as a matter of curiosity, I have only to direct to the first religious tract which happens to fall in his way from a regular orthodox quarter ; and he will meet with the usual stereotyped phrases in which religion is described and taught.

But, to an earnest and sincere inquirer after divine truth, which I take to mean something different from religion,—as religion is commonly understood, at least,—I will offer a reply which is worth considering with some attention. I take it from the well-known work of Barclay, entitled, “An Apology for the True Christian Divinity,” of which Sir James Mackintosh observes, that “It is a masterpiece of ingenious reasoning, and a model of argumentative composition : which extorted praise from Bayle, one of the most acute and least fanatical of men.” \*

I shall prefix to the extract I am about to make, this text from St Paul’s Epistle to Titus, (chap. ii. 11, 12) :—“The grace of God that bringeth

\* Mackintosh’s “Revolution in England,” p. 169.

salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

"This grace," says Barclay, "the Scripture expresses by several names; as, the seed of the kingdom;\* the light that makes all things manifest;† the Word of God;‡ or manifestation of the Spirit given to profit withal; a talent;§ a little leaven;|| the Gospel preached to every creature.¶

"By this seed, grace, or Word of God, I understand a spiritual, heavenly principle, which of its own nature draws and inclines to God. And as every unrighteous action is witnessed against, and reprov'd by this principle; so, by such actions it is hurt and wounded, and flees from them, even as the flesh of man flees from that which is of a contrary nature to it.

"As this principle is received into the heart, and suffered to bring forth its natural and proper effect, that spiritual birth of which the Scripture

\* Matt. xiii. 18, 19.

† Eph. v. 13.

‡ Rom. x. 17; 1 Cor. xi. 7.

§ Matt. xxv. 15.

|| Matt. xiii. 33.

¶ Col. i. 23.



makes so much mention, calling it, 'the new man;' 'Christ within, the hope of glory,' &c., comes to be formed and raised." He describes the operation of this principle in the heart, to depend *in the first instance upon its not being opposed*. "The working is of the grace, or principle," he says, "and not of the man;" and it is a passiveness rather than an act; though afterwards, as man is wrought upon, there is a will raised in him, by which he comes to be a co-worker with the grace. But the first step is not by man's working; but by his *not contrary working*."

He illustrates this, by supposing the case of a man greatly diseased. "I suppose," he says, "God, who is the Great Physician, not only to give this man physic, but to come and pour the remedy into his mouth; and, as it were, to lay him in his bed."

We may surely conceive this to be accomplished, when a man, tossed about as this poor Lavater was, with conflicting thoughts and feelings, and remembering the Scripture maxim, "*Be still, and know that I am God*," becomes still; silences all the busy workings of his tumultuous emotions;

and, guided by another encouraging scripture which says, "In returning and rest ye shall be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength,"\* *labours* to be quiet, by standing firm and motionless as a rock against the surging billows of the fleshly nature.

"But how is he to stand thus firm, and silent, and motionless," it will be asked, "against these surging billows that are part and parcel of his own nature?" I grant that it is extremely difficult; but I *know* it is not impossible. The repetition of a brief prayer, (the briefer the better,) two words, "Lord, help," "Lord, quiet," "Lord, *still* me," earnestly and constantly repeated, and always *with a will* for the calmness asked for; (if this is wanting, the whole affair is a mockery, and a sham),—this, sustained as long as possible, † will act as medicine administered by God himself; or, as Barclay says,

\* Isaiah xxx. 15.

† I can say, and that under the solemn consciousness that I speak in the presence of God, that, in circumstances of extreme trial, many years ago, this method of short and simple supplication was practised by me,—not for hours only,—but for days, weeks, months together, in my waking hours, with scarcely any cessation, except when I had to take my meals, or to receive visits from my friends. I could not have gone through what I had to undergo without the help thus obtained.

“God comes and pours the remedy into the sick man’s mouth ; and, as it were, lays him upon his bed.” “And thus, if the man is but passive,” he proceeds, “the remedy will necessarily work its effect. But if he be stubborn and untoward, and will needs rise up, and go forth into the cold, or eat such fruits as are hurtful to him, while the medicine should operate ; then, though of its own nature, it tendeth to cure him, yet it will prove destructive to him, because of the obstructions it meets with.”

“But what *is* the medicine,” it may be asked, “that God administers ?” To this we may reply, It is *impressions* made upon the mind,—not in long-winded speeches,—such as poor Lavater makes to himself, by the page together in his journal ; but by gleams of light.

“A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the lustre of the firmament of bards and sages.”\*

I remember, that nearly fifty years ago, long before I had any knowledge even of the usual

\* Emerson, “Essay on Self-Reliance.”

teaching of evangelical preachers, such as Mr Simeon ; when, in fact, the whole of my religion stood in the light of nature ; upon an occasion (and oh, how manifold, and how trying *were* such occasions !) in which I was tossed and torn by the whirling anguish of multitudinous and opposing thoughts, a voice within me said, "Don't talk ; go by *glimpses and glances*."

I had not faith enough—nor experience to give faith—nor self-control enough, to resolutely stop the noise and tumult of my thoughts, and wait for the quiet, gentle gleams of light to which I was thus divinely directed ; so I made nothing of them. But I felt their power so far as this : that I saw they were truths, and that it was in this way of *inward shining*, that divine truth was imparted. For, if "God is Light," as Scripture tells us, and also teaches us to say, "With Thee is the fountain of light, and in Thy light shall we see light," how should he speak to, and instruct the soul, but by giving it light ? And in order to perceive this soft and delicate interior illumination, what quiet and watchful attention is necessary ! What an inward silencing, and turn-

ing away from that babble of the tongue, which seldom talks less to the purpose than when, under the notion of instructing us in the way of righteousness, it sets us upon talking over our thoughts, words, and deeds, after the fashion in which Lavater probes and wearies himself, though, poor soul, with the best intention.

The first duty of man in his religious acts, Barclay says, is to *wait upon God* for the help of His good Spirit. And this act of *waiting* is in itself an act of silence and passivity. He then illustrates the matter, as it seems to me, very happily: "He that cometh to learn of a master," he says, "if he expect to hear his master, and be instructed by him, must not be continually speaking of the matter to be taught,\* and never be quiet; otherwise how shall his master have time to instruct him? Yea, though the scholar were never so earnest to learn the science, yet would the master have reason to reprove him as untoward and indocile, if he would always be meddling of himself, and still speaking, and not patiently wait to hear his master instructing and teaching him."

\* As in Lavater's case, for instance.

But it is time to close these quotations, and to return to our journalist, whom we left lamenting that "he could not confide in his feelings." The funeral of his deceased friend over, he returns home. "I travelled back," he says, "mournful, and yet replete with reviving and pious resolutions.

"I came to an inn, wholly occupied with meditations on death and my own mortality. Four people were sitting in the room. 'Savage souls,' thought I, (they were talking in a low, vulgar manner,) 'how deeply are you immersed in night and insensibility. Ye are mortals, like myself,—mortals like my friend,—and subject to death as well as we; but far distant from reflecting on death and eternity. Deplorable beings, who will remove the veil from your eyes?' This I said within myself, and was much exasperated at every posture, at every look, at every gesture and word of theirs."

Everything appertaining to these hapless strangers, seems to excite his ire; and he says that he was almost tempted to read them a severe lecture.

"However, the seriousness of my own situation soon led me back again to myself; I sent up to

Heaven, in their behalf, a few not very humble sighs. ‘O God! open the eyes of these unenlightened people!’”

It is a curious feature in the conduct of religious people on the subject of prayer, that they will sometimes, (perhaps unconsciously,) *fire off*,—I can really use no other expression,—a perfect cannonade of anger, against some one present who is under their displeasure,—and this when on their knees, and professing to be engaged in an act, which, of all others, demands freedom from every bitter thought. At the time when I was under the influence of the Irvingites at Cambridge, and, prostrated by illness, was lying on my sofa, seeking for nothing, God knows! but peace of mind, and the “meekness of wisdom” that gives it, I was visited by a person very high in the religious world as an evangelical minister. He offered me the visit; for, knowing his abhorrence of the Irvingites, and that he was aware of my acquaintance with them, I should never have asked to see him. Indeed, had it been possible, without discourtesy, to have declined his visit, I should have done so; under an idea that he proposed it with



a view of administering a homily for my heresy, as he would call it, which turned out to be the case. I listened quietly to all he had to say, which, having finished, he said :—

“And now, I hope, you are convinced of your error in going after strange doctrines; and are prepared to return to the simplicity of scriptural truth?” As this was put in the form of a question, and I was not disposed to answer it with the submissive assent he expected, I merely replied, “That I was not yet convinced that the persons he censured so harshly, altogether deserved it; and until I was satisfied of their being deluded themselves and deluding me, I would rather let things remain as they were.” His only reply to this was, “Do you wish me to go to prayer?” If I had spoken the real feelings of my heart on this point, I should have said, “By no means, for I see clearly that you are not in a proper frame of mind to pray.” But I did not feel equal to the effort of opposing him, and so I bent my head in acquiescence with his proposal.

I wished very sincerely that I had not done so, when he gave forth a *tirade* of what, as far as the

*spirit* that prompted them was concerned, might truly be called *maledictions*, instead of petitions. "That the eyes of this Thy creature, now on the brink of eternity, may be opened before it be too late," I remember was the prevailing strain ; and though I do not recollect that "the gulf of hell" was, in so many words, specified as the impending danger which he saw before me, and *prayed* (God save the mark !) that I might be delivered from, yet the tone of his voice, quivering with rage, betrayed the rancour to which he was thus giving vent.

He has been in eternity himself for more than thirty years, and knows better now than he did in the days of his flesh, the blessed, merciful, and precious loving-kindness of Him, whose wrath he took such pains to *scare* me with. I always think, when I hear or read these fierce denunciations on the part of preachers and teachers, or of anybody else for that matter, against those of their fellow-creatures who dare to think for themselves on religious matters, and the certain doom of everlasting destruction which they foretell in the wrath of God which is to pass upon them, how overpowering

will be the amazement of these furious bigots, when they are met in their new state of being with a sight and sense of the *nature* of God—as Love! No wrath, no particle of an angry feeling, not an atom of the fearful indignation against lost human nature, which they have been preaching and teaching, and doing their best to shake over people's heads as an impending avalanche; but, in its stead, Love, sweet, gentle, tender, compassionate, and as full of mercy as it is of exceeding purity and simplicity. Truly, I think that, at that moment, the first feeling of these people will be intense hatred of their own mistakes, their own bigotry, their own evil passions, of pride, and envy, and arrogant assumption, which, under the notion of zeal, they have permitted to live and act in the garb of religion. But enough; we will return to our journalist, whom we left engaged in sending up to heaven, in behalf of the “savage souls” he fell in with at the inn, “a few not very humble sighs.”

“I went to the corner of the room,” he goes on to say, “and taking the New Testament out of my pocket, read a little in it.” Under the cir-

cumstances, it would seem to have been wiser to have read the newspaper. As was to be expected, he could get but little good out of his occupation. "After reading a short time," he states, "I grew angry at the noise these people made, and desired the landlord to let me have a room to myself. Having conducted me to one, he showed me his son's study. 'My son,' said he, 'is a surgeon, and a great adept in anatomy.' He then pressed me to see his collection of skeletons, &c.

"I did not much like it at first; however, as soon as I entered the room and beheld the drawers, I was much pleased, and looked upon that incident as sent by Providence. What disgusted me most, was the garrulity of the landlord, and his repeating ever and anon, how sorry he was that his son was not present. I wished to be left alone. In order to get rid of him, I inquired whether he would not give me leave to examine the books? 'Certainly.' He did not, however, guess at my drift. I took a book from the shelf, turning over its leaves, and put it again in its former place. I then took down another with anatomical tables, asking him whether I might take it with me into my room.

“I should be welcome to stay in the room, and peruse it there, as long as I should like, if it would be more convenient,’ said he, with great kindness, and left me. I laid the book down, took pencil and paper, and drew a skull as well as I could after one which I found in the room. Having finished my drawing, I perceived that the skull could be taken off the skeleton ; so I took it down, and held it in my hand some time.”

His meditations over this grim object, as well as some he indulges in over some anatomical subjects preserved in spirits, are suggestive, but too long to be quoted.

“It came into my mind,” he says, “to provide myself with a human skull ;—the sight of it will certainly remind me frequently most powerfully of my mortality,—I shall then more frequently act wiser, and with more seriousness, and be less capable to forget the vow I made at the coffin of my friend.”

The feelings and the senses—these seem to be the monitors he seeks. Surely there is more wisdom in the asceticism which aims at destroying the dominion of these seductive despots—for such

they too certainly are—in the tyrannic sway with which they hold poor mortals in captivity.

On preferring a request to the landlord for a skull, he is presented with a “beautiful white one.”

“Never has any gift afforded me so much pleasure as this skull. I was ready to embrace the landlord out of gratitude.” The landlord, as well he might be, is astonished at witnessing so much delight in such a ghastly gift. “‘I never saw anything so odd,’ said he; ‘to rejoice in such a manner at a skull! Pray, sir, tell me the reason of it?’ ‘I have,’ said I, abruptly, ‘lost a friend a few days ago; and I wish never to lose sight of my own mortality. That skull there, which you were so kind to give me, shall be my remembrancer.’”

The common-sense landlord observes, that “if this is the only motive it will soon wear off,”—making at the same time a Latin quotation signifying that “‘there is no kind of grief which time will not extinguish.’ This reply made me smile, and at the same time staggered me. I took up the skull, went to my room, and continued my journal.”

The next day he returns home, and relates that

he spoke of his friend's decease to his wife "without shedding a tear, and without feeling that lively emotion with which I had left his grave."

The fact is, that he finds, as, through mercy, we all of us find, that our emotions of pain are not designed to be permanent, but, like all else that relates to our impressions on the side of feeling, are to be left to follow their natural course into decline and oblivion. For

"What is this passing scene?—  
A peevish April day,—  
A little sun, a little rain ;  
And then night sweeps along the plain,  
And all things pass away."\*

With which soberising reflection we will take our leave of Lavater.

\* Kirke White.



## CHAPTER XXIX.

THE details of every newspaper of every day are nothing less than sermons to those who regard the course of circumstances as indicating the ever-present, ever-active agency of God. It is sad that, for the most part, they fall powerless in making any deep and permanent impression. The minds of the usual readers of these records of living history, are too much engrossed with the things of time and sense which have a direct and immediate reference to their own individual interest, to allow of their pausing over the incidents which have no bearing upon these, although they may be fraught with materials the most suggestive of valuable and instructive reflection.

It happens, however, that once in a while an event occurs, so stamped with circumstances of an appalling character, and circumstances, too, which

are of a kind to link us with the incident by the common chain that binds humanity together, that we are struck as by an electric shock, and, let our hindrances to reflection be what they may, they are for a time—and with some of us, for a long time—overpowered by the solemnity of the thoughts which are thus awakened within us.

Of this kind is the fearful tragedy of the recent railway accident at Abergele. It is difficult to conceive a case more loaded with striking contrasts,—between life luxuriating in the vivacity of existence, and floating in a serene ocean of calm enjoyment,—and death, sudden, strange, overwhelming, irresistible, submerging them in a moment in a vortex of horror. Oh, voice of wisdom! well hast thou counselled us to “boast not of to-morrow, for we know not what a day may bring forth!”\* To-morrow! Alas!—

“In what far country does to-morrow lie?”

Yet, where is the heart that does not expatiate on to-morrow’s visionary pleasures? and when is this mental feeding on the provender of fancy more indulged in, than when the body—fancy’s faithful

\* Proverbs xxvii. 1.

minister and comrade—is going forth in rapid motion, assimilating with the outgoings of the mind ?

Who of us is there, possessed of experience enough to remember the emotions which commonly accompany a journey,—who cannot sympathise with the enchanting excitement which doubtless dilated many a heart amongst that company, unconsciously rushing to the close of every source of earthly sensibility ? What dreams of enjoyment—different, no doubt, in kind and in degree, but in their nature adapted to the recipients of them—floated through the imaginations of those doomed travellers ! Can we not picture to ourselves how these rainbow tints of hope and expectation borrowed unusual brightness from the radiance of surrounding nature ? and how, under the feeling of security and ease, the subjects of these gratifying sensations drank in the delicious vivacity of changing scenes as they bounded along their way ? No matter that they were strangers, for the most part, to each other : they had met as fellow-creatures, bent upon a common purpose, and that a purpose of gratification to the allowable wills

and wishes of their nature. Can we not, beyond all this, imagine the buoyant happiness of the young ones of the party? *Their* anticipations of pleasure, *their* golden visions, *their* boundless hopes and expectations, from a world so full of joy. Can we not conceive that even the aged would forget for a little interval their burden of years and sorrows, and yield themselves willingly to the soothing influence which change of scene and circumstances so often diffuses over wearied and declining life? For the moment—perhaps for the immediate moment—a party more exempt from the perturbing agitations of life's daily discords it might have been hard to find. But what have mortals to do with happiness, or with ease, or with pleasure, or with any cup of earthly satisfaction that is put into their hands, but just to touch it with their lips, and put it from them? In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the visions of joy, the radiance of nature, the buoyant hopes and expectations which danced upon the future as the ground of paradise, life—life itself, the root and source of all this rapture—is fearfully crushed out of them! Time is not found for the utterance of a cry. The furious

forces of inevitable destruction come down like an avalanche on these hapless beings, and extinguish the existence with which but the moment before, they were filled to the brim. True indeed, is the word of the afflicted patriarch in relation to the denizens of the world at large as well as to himself. For how many are there, besides this severely and suddenly visited company, who might say with him and with them, "My days are past, —my purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart." \* How many indeed ! and what is the instinctive language from the lips of any, and all of us, who are the lookers-on upon this awful catastrophe—what can it be, but that of the prophet, "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour." † To thus much of astonishment and dismay, the most devout amongst us may be allowed to give utterance, but to nothing in the shape of doubt—nothing that ignorantly presumes to question the wisdom and the mercy that dwell in the darkness, which, as Scripture tells us, it pleases God to "make His secret place," (Psalm xviii. 12.)

\* Job xvii. 11.

† Isaiah xlv. 15.

It is true that nature,—poor, ignorant nature, marvels at the small account that seems to be made of her most highly-prized and best-loved gift of life. And if this life were all, it would be strange indeed, to find it so often treated as a thing of nought. But there is a much wiser guide than nature near us, and one who is given as the rectifier of nature; and when the first concussion to thought and feeling given by this fearful event has subsided, the appointed regulator of the mind will enable it to perceive with impressive earnestness, how precarious is the tenure by which many of us hold this cherished life. Yes, we shall be constrained to *feel* as a solemn fact, what we may have hitherto regarded as a mere platitude, or an epigrammatic saying, that “Man proposes, but God disposes.” We shall *know* that He does dispose of us as it pleaseth Him. We shall have it confirmed to us that “in the midst of life, we are in death,” and the lesson left with us will be that profitable one given forth as a warning by the apostle which tells us that “the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden

destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child ; and they shall not escape.”\* But whilst we make this practical application to ourselves, we will venture to believe that the good Spirit that suggests it will infuse into our hearts a hope full of consolation, touching those so suddenly cut off from the land of the living. There is much, in truth, for the devout and thoughtful mind to repose upon, in considering how many and how severe might be the trials and temptations looming in the future of all these victims of unforeseen destruction, from which they are now delivered. Who among us, that has been often and sharply exercised with spiritual conflict, and is gifted with inclination to study and understand the lessons of experience, but would think it, upon the whole, a benefit to die ? What says the poet on that point ?

“ To die is to begin to live ;  
It is to end an old, stale, weary work,  
And to commence a newer and a better.” †

“ Is not death,” says Niebuhr, “ when freely chosen and prepared for, the most solemn and

\* 1 Thess. v. 2, 3.

† Beaumont and Fletcher.



beautiful thing to which life can aspire?" It may be so, it will be replied, but these poor sufferers had no time granted them for choice or preparation.

It is not for any of us to judge of their respective fitness or unfitness for their mighty transit into another state of being. Doubtless, there were amongst them diversities of condition, as it regarded their interior nature. But with that we have nothing to do. To their own master they must stand or fall. It is with their condition as our fellow-creatures that we have alone to do, and much to do in a way of sympathising faith and hope, and in those tender sentiments which our common humanity inspires. Under these influences we may be permitted to believe that the stroke by which they fell was a deliverance from evil. We have but to look at the nature which revelation teaches us to ascribe to the Great Being, without whose agency "not a sparrow falls to the ground," and in whose sight "the very hairs of our head are numbered," to recognise it as the Fountain of Love. "God is Love;"\* and "Oh,

\* 1 John iv. 8.

how sweet is Love!" says an old divine of the Puritan school. Let us for a brief interval listen to these thoughts of his upon the most precious of all our human emotions.

"Oh, how sweet is Love! how pleasant is its nature! how takingly does it behave itself in every condition, upon every occasion, to every person, and about every thing! How tenderly, how readily doth it help and serve the meanest! How patiently, how meekly doth it bear all things, either from God or man! How doth it excuse and cover over that which seemeth not to be excusable, nor fit to be covered! How kind it is in its interpretation concerning faults! It never over-chargeth; it never grates upon the spirit of those whom it reprehends. It never hardens, it never provokes, but carries a meltingness and power of conviction with it. This is the nature of God." Now, these are not words without meaning, packed together to make a sentence; but the outcome of a soul filled to its capacity of reception with a living sense of the blessed reality on which it expatiates. If the creature could thus, in the fulness of his joy, exalt the loving-kindness

of the Creator ; if the mere spray from the fountain is thus redolent of rapture, what must be the Infinite Source itself, but such as "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive."

Looking here, we behold no trace of what only seems strange and shocking to the narrow views of the earthly part, in the catastrophe we are considering. Unquestionably, to the eye that looks chiefly to material objects, it *is* shocking to contemplate those disfigured remnants of humanity. It *is* shocking to pause there, and sigh over the devastation wrought upon God's wondrous workmanship, and with the eye of imagination to regard the wreck, the frightful wreck, of those bodies so "fearfully and wonderfully made," but a few hours before, instinct in every part with human life, and with the intelligence of humanity, but now a charred and blackened mass, so shapeless and disfigured that not a form can be found in it, to be decently shrouded in the habiliments of the grave. This is shocking ; but let us pass by that painful, that hideous aspect of the matter. To the eye of faith it has another and a better one ; for that is

the eye that looks beyond the ruined heap of mortality that lies out yonder. It remembers that in their own appointed tabernacle, spirits inhabited that undistinguishable mass, and though the vehicles which held them are transmuted into ashes, they themselves yet live, for spirits cannot die. And might not some of these, like birds released from captivity, exulting in the ecstasy of freedom so new and so enchanting, mount upwards to their Source, singing hallelujah to the Giver of their new-born, beautiful, and blessed life! To many of their dear ones left behind, the thought of them as a blackened mass, in the place of the form so pleasant and so loved, may as yet, and for a long time to come, be agonising ; but only let us place ourselves in a position of mind to consider what any and every dead body presents to the eye of the beholder, after it has lain for one year in the grave, and the sentiment of recoil will be much the same in both cases. In the one instance, probably, the eyes were reverently closed by loving hands, and the limbs composed and habited in clothing fitted to give the semblance of tranquil decency to dust and ashes. But this senseless

form is dust and ashes still ; no other, and no better than the dust and ashes gathered from the ruins of the railway accident. The only difference is, that in the one case the transmutation was speedy and immediate, in the other it was slower and more gradual ; but with neither of them does our higher being hold communion. *That* lies in the realms of thought. And what says a great master in that kingdom ? I will conclude this dissertation in his words, for none that I can give you are so well worth hearing : " When the act of reflection takes place in the mind, when we look at ourselves in the light of thought, we discover that our life is embosomed in beauty. . . . Behind us, as we go, all things assume pleasing forms, as clouds do afar off. It is only the finite that has wrought and suffered ; the infinite lies stretched in smiling repose." \*

\* Emerson's Essay on Spiritual Laws.

## CHAPTER XXX.

ALL things must find a time to end ; and increasing infirmities, with an approach to the borders of fourscore, remind me that finality is hovering over me. It seems desirable therefore, that I should conclude this occupation; which has furnished me with some pleasant, and, I venture to believe, not unprofitable hours.

I am quite aware, that in these days of sensational literature, such a work as this is likely to meet with but a limited circle of readers. This does not in the least discourage me ; for I entirely hold with the sentiments of a certain author, (whose name I forget,) which he expresses by saying, " I would rather be read a hundred times by one person, than but once by a hundred."

To those who reflect upon what they read, I believe that any production is interesting, that exhibits a record of the vicissitudes of human

experience ; and which, like the variations of a weather-glass, are the out-showing of the conflicting elements of events and circumstances that agitate mortal existence. These form the invisible, but most influential surroundings of human beings ; giving to every individual amongst them, a history,—of course, the history which most abounds with incident will be the most popular ; for grown children, like growing ones, crave for “a story.”

An amusing anecdote is told of Rowland Hill on this point. He had been preaching on one occasion to an inattentive congregation, coughs and blowing of noses were so incessant, that he could obtain no kind of dominion over the hubbub that prevailed ; at last, he suddenly broke out with the words.

“Last Monday”——

In a moment the hush of death came over the assembly. You might have heard a pin drop !—Having thus opened his way to a hearing, he finished his sentence by adding—“a man was hanged at Tyburn ;” and then proceeded to improve the opportunity, by showing them how open



their ears and their attention were to anything that engaged their curiosity ; whilst to that which was to benefit their souls, they were as lifeless as so many corpses.

But to return for a brief interval to this work of mine, which I am about to close. I am sensible that there is much in it which will be disputed, as it regards the small account I seem to make of the body which it has pleased the wisdom of God to bestow upon us, and which it will be said (and justly enough) that we must of necessity use in His service as well as in any other work in which we find ourselves engaged. I do not for a moment dispute this. On the contrary, I am well assured that the body is so essentially connected with the soul, that it is impossible to help the one without seeking assistance from the other.

There is a text in the book of Revelations, from which it may seem fanciful to extract the spiritual meaning, which I often do ; but which at the hazard of not being understood, and possibly, of being laughed at, I will give. It is this, “and the earth helped the woman ;” \* “and what, in the

\* Rev. xii. 16.

name of common sense, are you going to make of this?" I hear you say. Well, before I go into any explanation of what certainly looks like a riddle, let me ask you a question.

Did you never, in moments of strong excitement (perhaps in the season of youth, rather than at a more advanced period)—did you never, in order to prevent your nature from breaking out into a paroxysm of tears, or angry words, or some sort of demonstration,—instinctively bite your lips, or press both hands upon the arms of your chair, or upon the table—or, in short, have you not set your *earth*, which is your body,—to "help the woman," which is your soul, (at least both poetry and piety speak of it as of the feminine gender,) and thus tried to be still and quiet, much as nurses do, when a child is about to break out into a roar! They divert the mind of the child from its own particular point of disturbance by calling upon it to look at something else. "See here,—look there," they cry—and why? Because it is a law of the mind that it cannot possibly be engrossed with more than one thing at a time. I do not mean that the nurse-maids act on metaphysical grounds,

but that it is an instinct with them, to escape the bother of the child's crying, by calling its attention to something else, and it is usually for the moment effectual ; just as the sensation of the bitten lip overpowers the sensation of anger or any other strong emotion, and hinders it from coming forth in words.

I am reminded here of a case in point. It is mentioned in the memoirs of Miss Aiken. I must go a little out of the way to bring out the bearing which it has upon what we are speaking about. But as the passage which leads to it is full of truth, I will quote it at length. She is speaking of the inferior grade, as it respects themselves and all their belongings, in which society places woman.

"Society," she says, "wrongs us, where the laws do not. The life of a woman is esteemed of less value than that of a man. Juries of men are very reluctant to punish the slayer of his wife as a murderer ; her testimony is under-valued ; men juries often discredit her evidence against a worse than murderer. She is wounded by the privileged insolence of masculine discourse. 'Woman and fool,' says spiteful Pope, and dunces echo him.

Any feeble-minded man is an 'old woman.' Fathers cry out to their boys in petticoats, not to care what their elder sisters say to them. These, and the like insults when my blood was hotter than now it is, *have cost me many a bitten lip.*"\*

As I do not wish to have it supposed that the rights, or *supposed* rights of my sex affect me as strongly as, in this passage, they seem to have affected Miss Aiken; and the occasion offers scope for a few remarks, which I may never have another opportunity of making, I will here venture to digress for a few moments, in order to relieve my mind of some thoughts on the vexed question touching woman's position in human affairs, and her claim to take a higher place and a more active part in them than is customary. Although, as one of the sex, it concerns myself, I confess that I have no sympathy in the efforts made in some quarters, to raise us in the scale of public position and its privileges. And I do not say this on the ground (though it is a safe and tenable standpoint) of my being an old woman, and not likely to be considered of any importance in any way,

\* "Memoirs of Lucy Aiken," by Mr La Breton, p. 369.

except to my old cat, whose welfare greatly depends upon my interest in his behalf ; but I speak on the ground of its being a manifest ordination of Providence, that the two sexes should take different departments in human affairs. And, as greater strength of body is man's distinction, and also, in general, greater vigour of mind, than falls to the share of woman ; as there are, also, domestic circumstances of necessary occurrence which render it sometimes impossible for women to be agents on the stage of public affairs, and which, at all times, would make it an incongruity that they should do so ;—the very voice of Nature, as well as of Providence, testifies against her attempting to share with man in the popular privileges which he holds in his own hands of taking a part in public affairs. I do not say that there may not be found many women endowed with masculine minds, and a measure of judgment calculated to make them more efficient in questions of a political kind than some of the men who have the discussion and management of them. But this is the exception, and not the rule. *That*, without any exception, let a woman's mental superiority be what it may,

points to her exercising her sway in the atmosphere of home. The duties which demand service here are different in kind from those which call for the exertions of men. But it is a difference which tends to act with immense advantage on the side of women. For what, I should like to know, is the value of skill in diplomacy, or oratory, or any exhibition of power abroad, compared with that which is exerted in rendering the fireside the scene of peace? What boots it to any man that the Chancellor of the Exchequer is a skilful financier, in comparison with the vast importance to his happiness which it is, that his wife should govern his household in a wise and economical way? And for the right administration of affairs there, another sort of mental furniture is needed than that which might fit a woman to shine in the House of Commons, and of a far more precious kind. It is not difficult for women, any more than for men, to make a noise, by coming forward as lecturers, or talkers, or doers, in a line that makes them popularly distinguished. A good stock of assurance, or, according to the definition of the great Lord Bacon as to what made an orator, "in

the first place, boldness, in the second and third, still boldness," will carry human beings of both sexes to a great height of distinction in the line which they have chosen to act in. But in the "cool, sequestered vale of life," where woman's proper walk is to be traced, it is not boldness that is wanted, but a much better thing, and that is *patience*,—a virtue which never comes without associate virtues, when it comes in company with religion ; and if it does not come in connexion with that principle, it is not patience, but something which, in its capacity of endurance, looks like it, but which, in its intrinsic nature, is quite another thing, for it is *pride*. Pride will help people to bear anything, rather than be overcome by it, because there is something mean and abject in being conquered ; but patience is a holy virtue, and one which brings in its train "meekness of wisdom," and a serene dignity of conduct, which renders the sway of the woman who is actuated by it in her daily domestic affairs, of vastly greater value than any other kind of sway she may exert. But I have got a long way from the point at which I set out, which was to endeavour at showing



that it is my desire to evince all reverence for the help which our poor bodies are capable of rendering us, in our various conflicts with the things of time and sense. As I have somewhat more to say on that point, I will now return to it. With respect to the process of biting the lip, as an aid in repressing anger, of which Miss Aiken makes mention, I can say nothing from experience; it being, unhappily, my habit rather to *let out* in language my sense of displeasure. But of the way in which "the earth can help the woman," or, to drop the metaphor, in which the body can be exceedingly helpful to the mind in relation to its devotional exercises, I can speak from long and certain experience. It is fit, however, that I should state that it is exclusively as it relates to the devotional act, which Barclay describes as "waiting upon God," that the aid of the body, after the manner in which I am led to seek it, can be received. The manner in which it is used by the usual body of worshippers, is to employ it in kneeling, speaking, and singing; against which acts, as testimonies of worship, I have nothing to say.

But, in silent devotion, the first step necessary,

is to bring the body as near to *perfect stillness*, as possible.

“Then how is it possible to get any service out of it?” you ask. Stay a moment, and I will tell you of a very powerful service which it will render, (better than biting the lip,) if you will but believe me; and if you cannot take my word for it,—the next time you are greatly agitated, and want to get composed,—try it.

In the first place, a position of rest must be taken; that of reclining, I always find the most effectual; then, the eyes must be closed; but though closed, they can *inwardly* be fixed upon an *imaginary* point, and this is a great matter; for this fixedness of the eyes has a gradually increasing power of *fixing* or concentrating the mind.

In Gibbon’s “Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,” there is a curious passage relative to the monks of Mount Athos which bears on this point. It is given in Gibbon, in the words of an abbot of the monastery, who flourished in the eleventh century.

“When thou art alone in the cell,” says the ascetic teacher, “shut thy door, and seat thyself

in a corner ; raise thy mind above all things vain and transitory. Incline thy beard and chin on thy breast ; turn thy eyes and thought towards the middle of thy body, and search the place of the heart, the region of the soul. At first, all will be dark and comfortless ; but if you persevere day and night, you will feel an ineffable joy ; and no sooner has the soul discovered the place of the heart, than it is involved in a mystic and ethereal light.”\*

The fixing the eye upon an *outward* point, steadfastly continued for a time, has certainly a potent influence over the body. A young man, who is a friend of mine, and often calls to have an hour's talk with me, and now and then to get a sharp homily for running after “the rat and mouse” demonstrations, told me, not long since, that, being at his own desire, (at some *séance* he was attending,) put under the mesmeric influence, and desired to fix his eye on a black spot in a card he held in his hand, he did so, till he felt his senses going, and gave the matter up.

Being drawn to a centre, and remaining there,

\* Decline and Fall, in one vol. p. 1108.

still and motionless, is the first step, you may believe me, to the noblest and most exalted mode of devotion, which is communion with God. The power of *centres* is a great mystery. But what are we surrounded by, on every side, inwardly and outwardly, but mysteries ?

That by patient and sustained introversion, we might find many of these mysteries opened up to us, I do not for a moment doubt. But the habit of being led by the senses, overpowers us with the impression of the outward world.

"The ideas or objects of the intellect," says Dr Cudworth, "are nothing else but modifications of the mind itself. But *sense is of that which is without*. Sense wholly gazes and gads abroad, and doth not know and comprehend its object, because it is different from it. Sense is a *line*; the mind is a *circle*. Sense is like a line which is the flux of a point running out from itself; but intellect is like a circle that keeps within itself." \*

All this is mysterious; and the only thing we can do, is, *not* to seek by this and the other wild,

\* "A Treatise concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality," p. 98. By Ralph Cudworth, D.D.

purposeless tricks, to pry into these mysteries, in order to see what trading capital for self we can get out of them. Our business is, to use them humbly and reverently, after the silent, simple, devotional manner, which "the man within the breast;" or, in other words, which "the inspiration of the Almighty which giveth understanding"\* suggests. That this suggestion points to the exercise of stillness of body, as helpful in promoting mental calm, I believe that all deeply-tried and thoughtful people, if religiously actuated, will be disposed to admit. In a work, written from a sick-bed, by an invalid, who, for many a year of suffering, had been prostrated there, there is a passage which describes with so much precision, the exact position of body which is helpful in silencing the mind, that I will quote it. I may premise, that in a conversation which I once held with this lady, I heard her speak of the benefit she had personally found in the practice of that *cessation from thinking* for which this position of body is favourable. I should also say, that it was simply on the ground of abstaining for a

\* Job xxxii. 8.

short time from giving way to thought that she commended the practice. She was no disciple of Barclay's, but a dutiful daughter of the Established Church, and a reverent observer of all its formulas. On the advantage, nevertheless, of internal silence for a certain time, the same Teacher that revealed to Barclay its value, doubtless instructed her. It is a blessed thing for us all, that this divine minister knows nothing of diversity of creeds, or the cry of "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos;" but whose ministrations tend only in one direction; which is to teach us how to "keep the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace." But, to return to the passage in question, which is addressed to a fellow-sufferer from long continued illness; and which is so valuable in every word, that I will give it entire.

"The burden of weakness which you are bearing, makes it seem to you as if all cares and trials centred in you, and that all must be borne and done in this moment of incapacity. Then, you feel that you shall never come out of it, and that seems of itself a wearisome weight of woe. To rouse yourself seems impossible; to take interest

in anything or person, most difficult. All you care for is to be left alone, not spoken to, and to be able to feel for a little season that you have no cares and responsibilities, nothing that you must attend to. Sometimes you *must* struggle on, there is really no escape from it. But even then, if you can get but a quarter of an hour, or even ten minutes, the best remedy is to lie perfectly still on your back, and your head as little raised as you can comfortably bear, with your arms by your sides and your eyes shut, resolving not to think at all. Do not make the slightest effort, not even to move a limb, or to speak. Do not even try to pray. Refuse all thoughts, pleasant or painful; or rather do not cherish or encourage any that offer themselves. When you first adopt this practice, you will feel and say that you cannot help thinking; but go on trying, and you will find that, by degrees, you acquire the habit of *not thinking*, and that it will become most valuable discipline to you, and be the greatest assistance in all your attempts at acquiring self-control.\* The injunction *not even to try to pray*," given above, I conceive to

\* "Sickness, its Trials and Blessings," p. 73.



result from the idea of the writer, that prayer necessarily comprised *thinking in words*, if not giving them utterance with the tongue,—so inconceivable is it, even to a truly devotional mind that has been trained in outward observances, that there can be any profit of a spiritual kind to be derived from silent supplication.

In speaking earnestly on this point on one occasion to a well-educated and highly intelligent woman, and advising her to try and adopt this mode of prayer, she replied, “I see much truth in what you say ; but the plain fact is, that if I were to try to put myself into the condition of inward silence of which you speak, I should go to sleep.”

“Well, you had better be asleep,” said I, “than indulging idle and unprofitable thoughts. But surely you need not set about this act of silent worship when sleep is likely to overtake you. A quarter of an hour of wakefulness may certainly be found in the course of the day for the practice of private prayer ; and even this small portion of time, daily dedicated to silence, with humble earnestness and desire for good, would create a habit of introversion which you would find of incalculable benefit.”

With respect to prayer, "do not think," says Fénelon, "that it is necessary to pronounce many words. To pray is to say, "*Thy will be done.*" It is to form a good purpose; it is to raise your heart to God; it is to lament your weakness; it is to sigh at the recollection of your frequent disobedience. . . . The best of all prayers is to act with a pure intention, and with a continual reference to the will of God."\*

Nothing can be more intelligible to the spiritual mind than this counsel; but to the natural man, it is totally incomprehensible that God can be served after this manner, with the breathings of the heart, apart from the language of the lip. He does not, for he *cannot*, see the mysterious connexion of spirit with spirit. But the mystery of connexion is the great secret of the universe. It meets us everywhere and in everything.

"A unity of idea reigns through the worlds of mind and nature. Thus there is a slumbering, unconscious reason in nature, and the highest purpose of natural philosophy is to compare it with the ideal reason within us. . . . We may at length

\* "Spiritual Letters."

pass beyond this point of view, and, disregarding outward facts altogether, may sink down into our own interior consciousness, grasp the *divine idea* as it exists *there*, and from it, as the starting-point, deduce a connected system of truth.”\*

The sum of the whole is, that in our present condition, we see, as the apostle says, but “through a glass darkly;” and the query which I have placed as a motto on the title-page of this work meets us at every turn:—“What is man, and whereto serveth he? What is his good, and what is his evil?”

In the Assembly’s Catechism in use in the Church of Scotland, an answer is given in reply to the question “What is the chief end of man?” which seems to me to supply an adequate solution to the above query:—“The chief end of man is to glorify God here, and to enjoy Him for ever.”† The enjoyment of the creature in the Creator must be the fulfilment of the end for which he was created. And what does it comprise but the satia-

\* Morell, “Elements of Psychology,” p. 249.

† I quote from memory, and may possibly omit or misplace a word.

tion of the soul in the contemplation of the perfection of beauty, goodness, and truth?—a realisation of that blessed promise, “My people shall be satisfied with My goodness;”<sup>\*</sup>—and an experience divinely expressed by the Psalmist when he says, “In Thy presence is fulness of joy, and at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”<sup>†</sup>

This consummation of bliss is to be known only in another stage of being; but a foretaste of it is sometimes granted here, to the sincere soul, in that precious state which it is its earnest and constant endeavour to experience, of—

“Desires composed, affections ever even,  
Tears that delight, and sighs that waft to heaven.”<sup>‡</sup>

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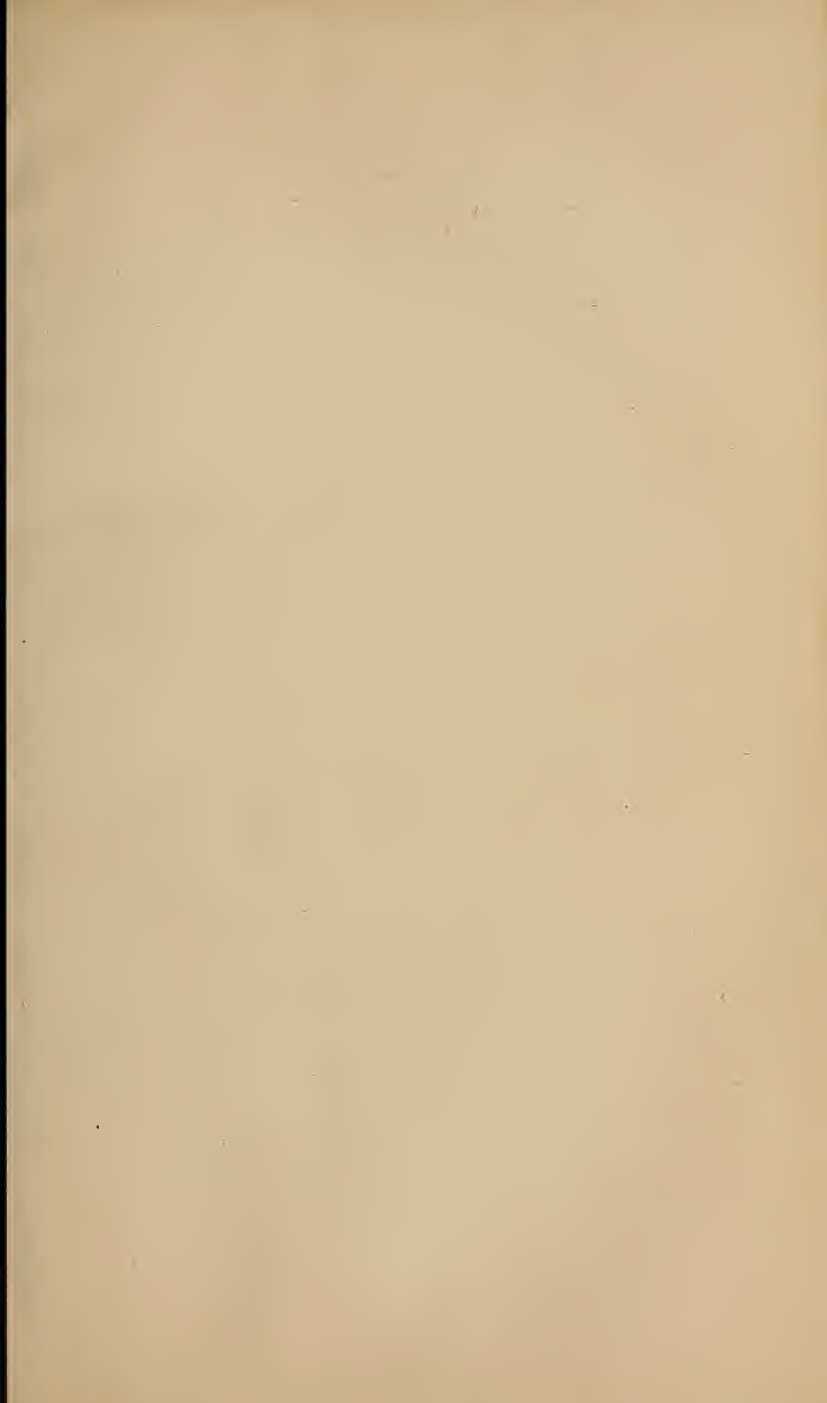
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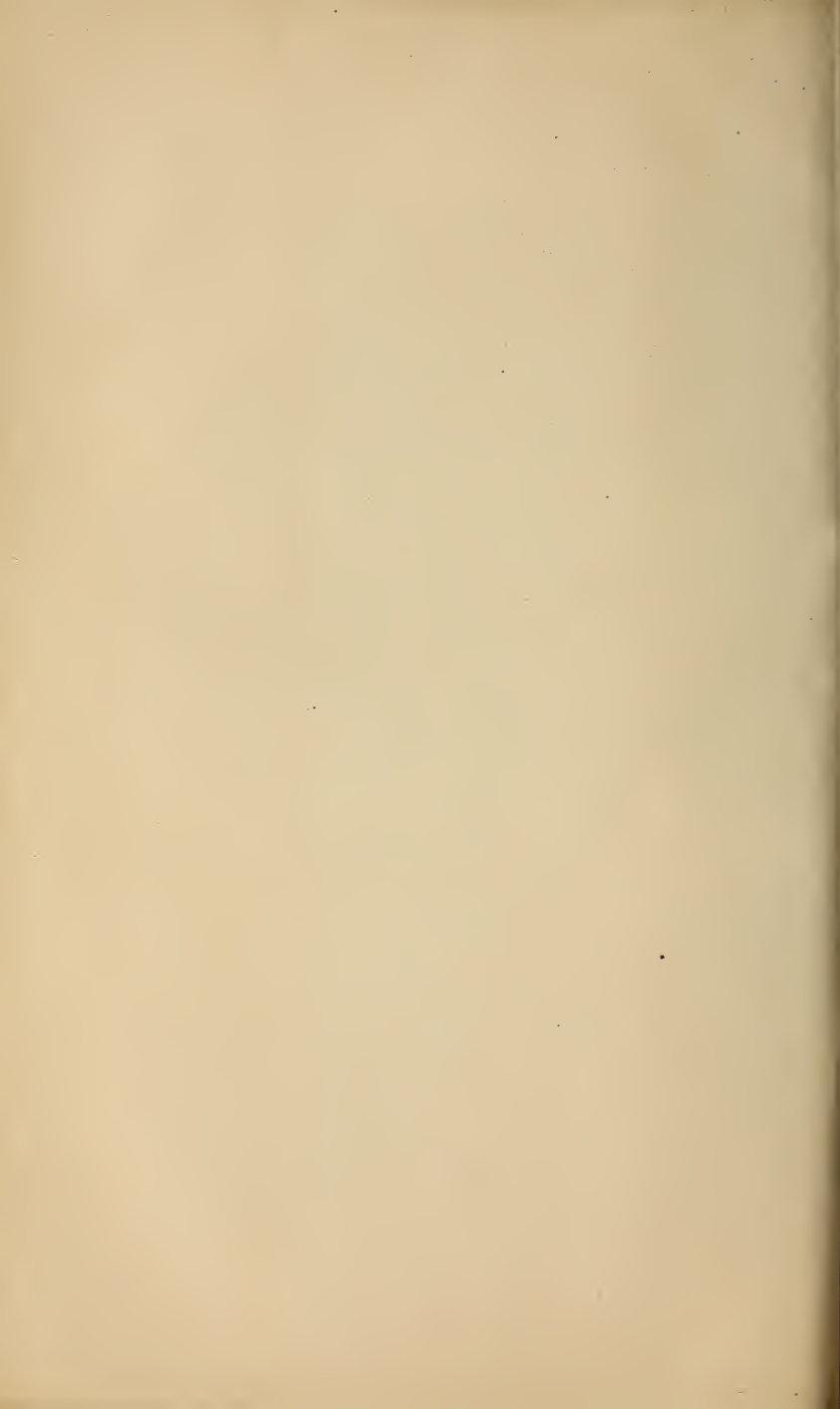
<sup>†</sup> Psalm xvi. 11.

<sup>‡</sup> Pope.

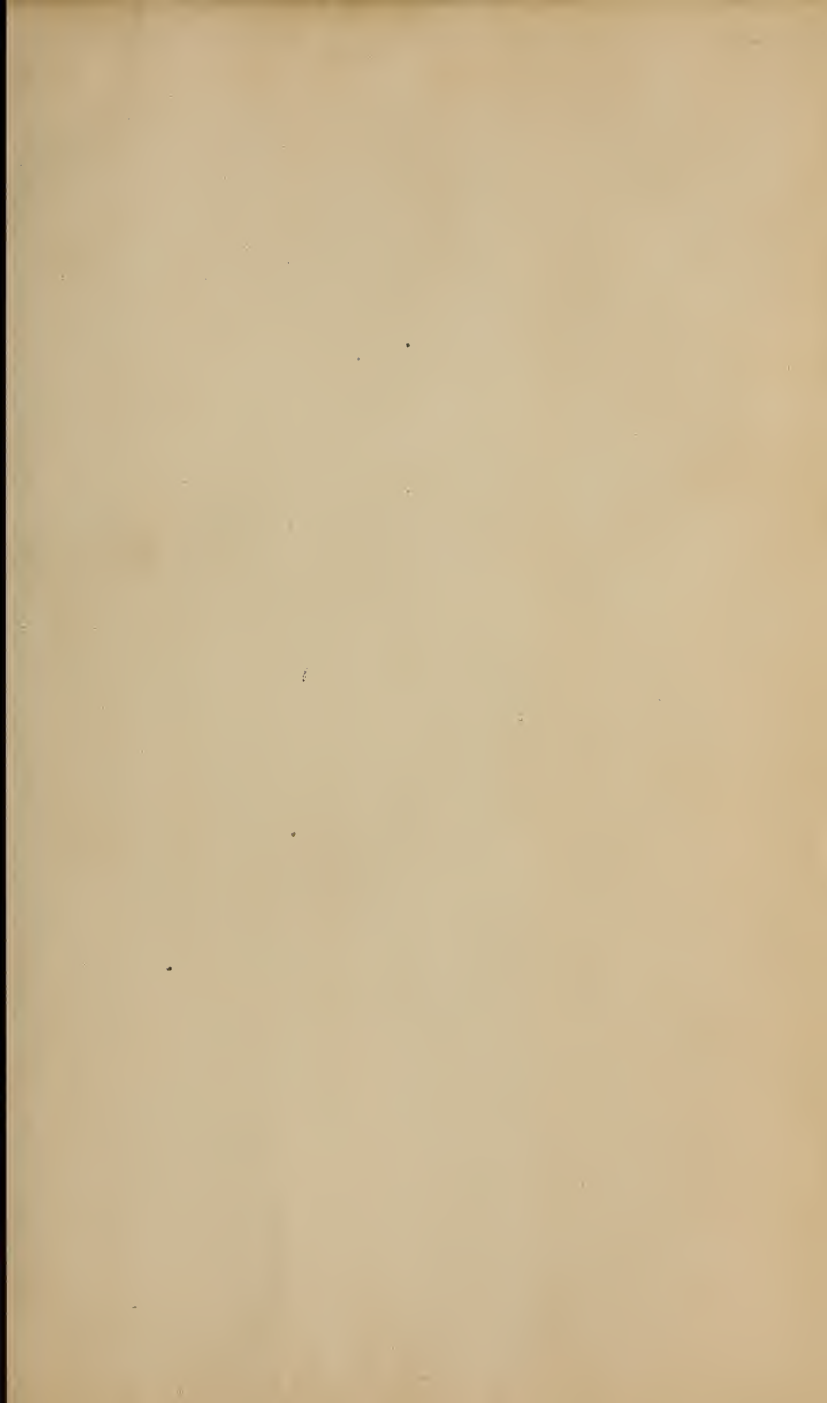
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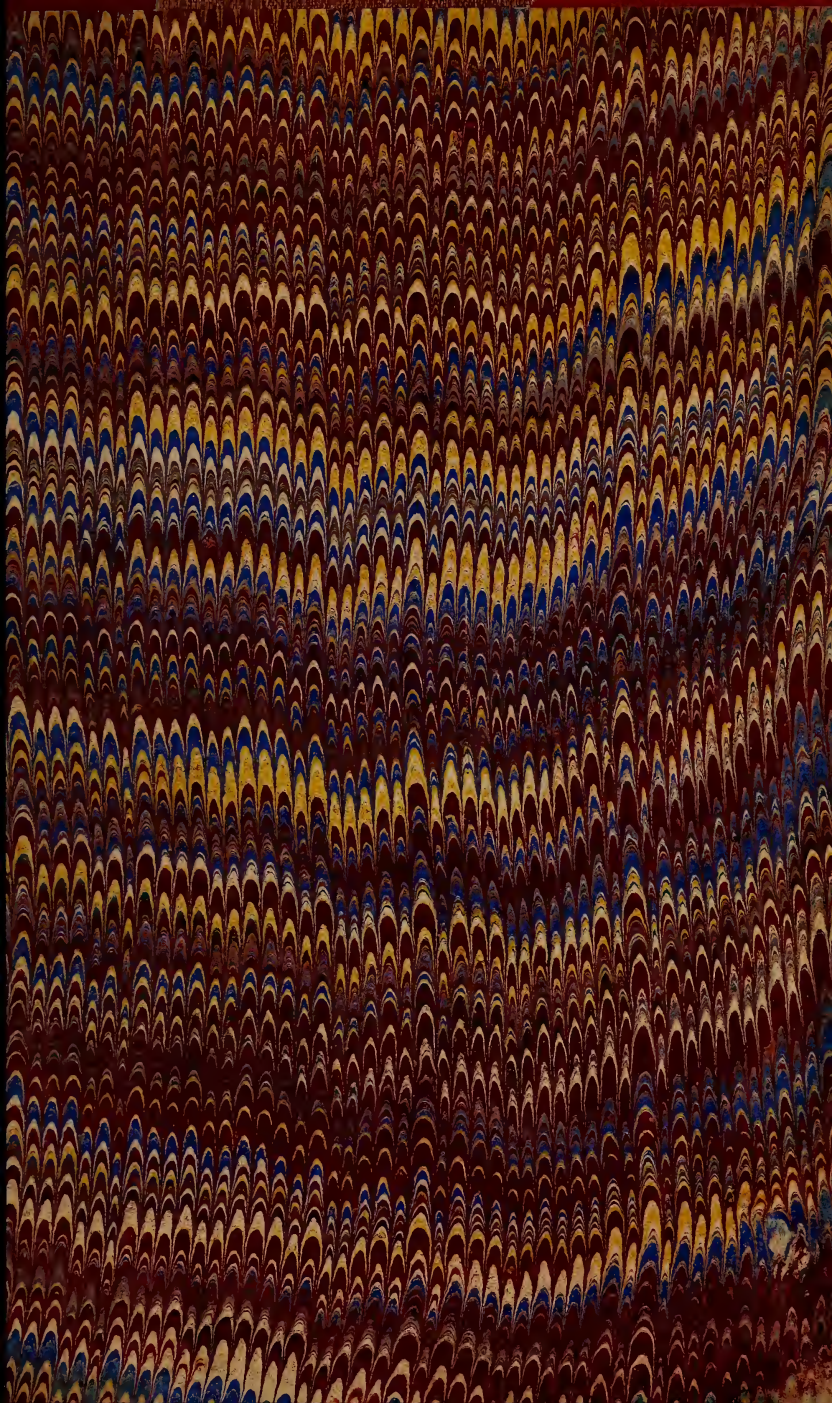




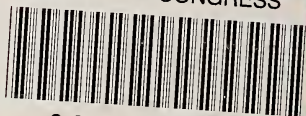








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